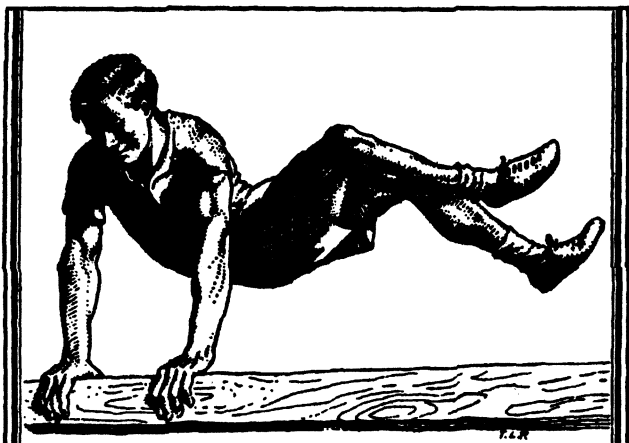


BLACK EYE

pathogenic and perverse



A FENCE IS ONLY AS GOOD AS THE PEOPLE WHO STAY BEHIND IT

BLACK EYE

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Printed at "The Compound"

1818 Carleton St. Berkeley, CA 94703-1908

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Black eye



ISSUE # 1

What Were You Thinking Of...

When You Dreamt That Up?

—Echo and the Bunnymen

It is 1988.

It is August.

It is the Beginning of the End.

In a dark basement room five figures move around a table. They talk. Three smoke. A piece of paper is drawn through a typewriter. One figure sits and leans forward, the smacking of typewriter keys echoes around the room and slowly words roll out onto the paper...

BLACK EYE was born pathogenic and perverse in a basement in the Lower East Side's Heart of Darkness. Half a dozen comrades armed with even fewer weapons (besides pens and typewriters, a few cartoons and quite a few ideas) set out to upend this rotten yuppified, spectacular world and provide first-hand reports of its demise. Initial articles ranged from paganism to the poverty of student life to the confessions of an ex-Trotskyist. Fiction and poetry complement revolutionary theory and resurgent utopianism. Eclecticism continues to be a virtue, is desired and cultivated, a political gesture itself in an era of heterogeneity. The common ingredient is liberation.

The malcontents responsible for this rag are lust-crazed maximalist freedom fighters, ornery and virulently independent squatters, latter day rock and roll Jacobins and potentialities seeking to impose their unique Frankenstein monster egos on an unsuspecting America oblivious to its own decomposition. It must be admitted: *BLACK EYE* was founded by anarchists.

At the very heart of the problem, if not near to it, one encounters Leftism, in its Liberal to Leninist variants, and institutionalized opposition, part and parcel of the dominant culture. The *BLACK EYE* folks recognize Right and Left as two sides of the same ugly coin and say don't take any wooden nickels and

DEMAND MORE THAN SPARE CHANGE!

The complicity of Leftism must be exposed. We refuse to forget the unforgivable or forgive the unforgettable.

The domination of the specialists will come to an end. Publishing is a good place to start. *BLACK EYE* publishes those who never fancied themselves writers, plagiarizes blatantly from all manner of texts, and snatches material circulating through the mail or mouthed by frenzied poets in New York City. *BLACK EYE* sneered at offers of word-processing and desk-top publishing and the concomitant smorgasbord of computer generated stylistics in order to demystify information and argument. "Hey I can do that!" With a few bucks, a typewriter and a xerox machine, anyone can be a modern Tom Paine, celebrating their opinions, communicating with others. *BLACK EYE* does not

seek to grow and pities those held captive by economic and productivist outlooks. Instead we hope to see similar projects initiated by others everywhere and all over our post-industrial landscape. We think that this will be an important step in people beginning to think for themselves again.

BLACK EYE wants to corrode all your received ideas and cherished ideological assumptions. It will give you a *BLACK EYE* if it doesn't open your eyes, and it might just set you on an adventurous path of zero-work role refusal and you'll discover you're a voluntary conscript in an army of conscious egoists practicing the permanent revolution of desire.

BLACK EYE is a proto-council of the marvelous.

BLACK EYE asks, Why not?

It is 2014.

It is August.

It is the End of the Beginning.

If the foregoing prospectus wasn't really written that way, it should have been. During the 80s and 90s there were a million zines. They came in all colors and flavors. Some were political, some were erotic, some were awful. Most were about being really pissed off at someone or something. Who knows how these things start? Someone somewhere finds that they have a few extra reams of paper, they type up a few ideas, maybe steal some artwork and paste and copy and staple for a few hours. Friends get copies in the

mail, strangers find them on the floor of a bus. They are thrown away; they are cherished. Pretty soon everyone is a publisher, an editor, a critic, a writer, and a clown; or at least they could be if they wanted to. And that is what fueled the global zine machine. The possibility; the dangerous, stormy potential.

In the spring of 1988 I had just been through a nasty breakup and with \$2,000 in my pocket went South of the Border to drink, sun, and with any luck, kill myself; well, two out of three ain't bad. I returned to NYC in July of 1988 and found that a few friends and malcontents who hung out at the Anarchist Switchboard had put enough material together to crank out an issue of a zine they called *BLACK EYE*. I had returned from Central America with sufficient diary and travelogue copy to pitch in an article for the next few issues. And that's how I found my way into the weird and wonderful world of zines.

Editorial meetings were occasionally train wrecks, with some writers holding one opinion of a specific article or idea and the remainder arguing the negative. Though never truly acrimonious, these meetings showed that whatever *BLACK EYE* was, everybody who worked on it cared a great deal about what went into it. In the end after the shouting and recrimination a general peace would once again prevail and usually the point of contention was lost in all the other business of the meeting. So it goes. The physical production of *BLACK EYE* was a work of love. Graphics were stolen from other zines, canned graphics

books lifted from art supply houses, things found on the street, advertisements, doodles. The first and second issue quickly showed that high contrast pen and ink worked much better than gently shaded images, so no Hokusai in *BLACK EYE*, but a lot of black and white graphics. Each writer was responsible for their own copy so the zine had a mind-bending array of fonts, sizes, smashed typewriter keys and sometimes just plain pen on paper. Articles from other zines were pilfered, sometimes by xeroxing them directly onto originals, or pieces of text were transcribed and used in the layout; no writer or artist was safe from our predations. We almost always credited the work we stole, at least when we knew who the author or artist was. The physical paste-up was an ugly event: rubber cement was spilled; there was cursing; pages were lost, hunted for, found and then lost again. One page would be botched, with facing pages being laid in upside-down or out of square or with the wrong page attached, which meant a quick run to the copy shop to make another copy. Then cigarette ash would burn a page and the entire process would begin again, accompanied by more cursing and smoking. Usually just one of us would take responsibility for pasting an issue together and then we would all take turns copying and collating the pasted originals. I don't like to think about many *thousands* of free copies I stole from my various places of employment. One of us worked in a stationery store with a xerox machine in back. Thousands more pages were churned out there. Another writer

worked for the city of New York and had scads of copies of some Emma Goldman material found one Monday morning—after the copier fritzed out the night before while she was in ninja mode. Embarrassing. Finally if no one could steal anymore copier time we went to Kinko's and paid for the last few copies—it was worth it.

BLACKEYE came out in print runs of five hundred, with the exception of the Tompkins Square Park Riot edition (Issue #3); we'll get into that later. St. Mark's Books would take a few copies and we'd all try to sell copies to people better off than we were, some we would give to friends—hundreds we would trade through the mail—another great secret of the zine world. As chaotic and fluid as the whole scene was, there was one central touch point, *Factsheet Five* (FF), a quarterly that came out of California and later, Rensselaer, New York. Originally the brainchild of Mike Gunderloy and in the beginning years covering only sci-fi fanzines, by the late 1980s FF contained reviews of literally thousands of zines. We would look through *Factsheet Five* for other zines that interested us and we would trade with them. The zine universe was an underground hive of activity, discussion, character assassination, and argument fueled by the US postal service.

BLACK EYE set out initially on a course of anarchist theory, fiction, and some personal reflection as in the “Diary of an Ex-Trotskyist” and the story “Puppy and Kitty Prison.” There were also a few essays on anarchism, and impressions of books read, street scenes witnessed,

whatever seemed to fit.

BLACK EYE started out as a local zine concentrating on issues of squatting, homelessness, NYC Police Department barbarity, and what we could cull from word of mouth. Then between the second and third issue the unreal happened. The City of New York decided to impose a curfew on Tompkins Square Park in the heart of the Lower East Side, a few blocks from both the squats and the Anarchist Switchboard. It was a ridiculous idea back then: few people had air conditioning and things only cooled down in the city late at night and most folks of the neighborhood spent much of their day at night, specifically in the park. I remember one evening strolling home from a particularly satisfying debauch at about 4am and seeing two old men playing dominoes on one of the park's benches.

The first night of the curfew was to be August 6th and all hell broke loose. The riot lasted until 2 or 3am and everyone was involved: little old ladies got water for the rioters; local tavern owners joined with patrons to beat on police officers; deli owners sold beer and soda half-price to rioters; wave after wave of cops tried to maintain order. The next day the city backpedaled hard and fast, withdrawing the curfew. The press roasted Mayor Koch and Gerald MacNamara, the commanding officer of the police forces. The official recriminations grew louder and uglier when it turned out the entire event had been videotaped and showed that cops had hidden their badge numbers to

avoid punishment and that they had attacked first. Score: Anarchists/Squatters/Lower East Side Residents, 1—NYPD, 0. We put everything we could find about the riot into Issue 3 and offset printed three thousand copies and sold almost all of them. It all culminated in one scene for me when two short little legs came easing down the steep steps of the Anarchist Switchboard, it was Allen Ginsberg come to see what we were all about. The next several issues maintained the action-orientation of the zine and covered the issues of squatting, gentrification, and the attempts by housing cops to throw out the malcontents. A number of the *BLACK EYE* writers participated in the continental gatherings and major protests, in Philadelphia and Washington DC and these were reported on in the journal.

The other global event that *BLACK EYE* found itself having to respond to was the fall of communism in Europe and the Tiananmen Square protests and riots. I remember watching the Berlin Wall falling on television and hearing the news reporter crow over the fact that the East Bloc had decided to participate in the Free Market. I kept thinking to myself I wonder what hell is really going on? The answers were not long in coming, *BLACK EYE* had excellent contacts in Poland and elsewhere in the Communist Bloc through *On Gogol Boulevard*, a magazine published in New York and smuggled into the Eastern Bloc. And very soon we heard that the desire for new Levi's was a red herring. People were fed up with being treated like pawns in the grand communist game; they were tired of being

numbered, oppressed, tortured—the spark was freedom (as the Russian underground press *samizdat* makes clear), not access to expensive clothing and the yuppie lifestyle.

Theory began to play a larger role in *BLACK EYE* and in many ways anarchist theory in the United States today is where the writers from *BLACK EYE* progressed to over the later issues, particularly in #5 through #11. *BLACK EYE* writers hated the Left, hence there was a truly strange mix of anti-civilization, feminist, and insurrectionary theory in *BLACK EYE*. In an occasionally nutty way, topics were hashed out: in one essay on VietNam Major Bellows reviews US foreign policy choices in Indochina and arrives at individualist anarchism. Edwin Hammer's articles consistently critiqued the cookie-cutter roles that civilization imposes on its actors. In one of my pieces I develop theses defining the activity of play in culture, politics, and economics. Public debates were rare among the writers, everyone seemed interested in their own realm of theory, though Sunshine D. and Mary Shelley actively debated feminism in two issues, neither one giving an inch of ground. I think Mary got the last word in. A number of pieces were lifted from other zines and books that interested us. One notable example is a humorous and effective piece by bp ummfatim (I assume this is a *nom de guerre*) titled "Take Things From Work." Suffice it to say with the death of the Left, the *BLACK EYE* writers were left to their own devices to try to make some sense of civilization. In traversing the blind alley

where left contestation was a no-show, some thinkers and activists appeared to light the way. We quickly found ourselves interacting with an eclectic mix of earlier theorists. Jacques Camatte, one-time amigo of Amadeo Bordiga and member of the Italian ultra-left communist tendency, proved to be an extremely important thinker and thanks to Fredy Perlman much of his most important material was available in English. Camatte had shown that Capital had effectively superseded the law of value and that through global dominance of the wage relation, the human species had been effectively proletarianized by the end of the Second World War. Both findings are central to the foundation of post-left anarchism—the death of class conflict and the triumph of Capital over the law of value. Post-modernism was never really explored nor utilized by any writer, though Baudrillard's *Mirror of Production* is still an important essay and probably the final nail in the coffin of Marxism. John Zerzan's material, particularly the essays in *Elements of Refusal*, proved to be seminal in identifying just what the anarchists were up against: civilization itself. Though no writer ever published an explicitly anti-tech piece, his work instilled in most of us a healthy distrust for the ideology and effect of technology on the species. The Situationists made their entrance into the general American consciousness via Ken Knabb and the publication of his *Situationist International (SI) Anthology* in the early 80s and among the anarchist milieu in NYC copies were passed around and devoured.

The jangled theoretics of the SI, which derived as much from Hegel and Fourier as they did from Marx, were occasionally breathtaking and many of us used their argumentative and conceptual models to develop our own ideas. We stole liberally from history and historians, which fueled many of my pieces on the Jacobins (Crane Brinton), the Fascists (Alice Yeager Kaplan), Progress (Georges Sorel), and Organization (Jacques Camatte). We read and were alternately interested and angered by the Frankfurt School. Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is central to understanding civilization as it appears today. Their seeming utopianism prior to 1950 was important, but their devolution into cynicism and withdrawal from discourse was something many of us considered cowardly, damning. On the other hand Marcuse never ran up a white flag, and his work on the psychology of Capital (*The One Dimensional Man*) is the last word on individual and social alienation in civilization. No book written since has even come close to his rigid and critical eye of the suffering, loneliness, and powerlessness in a civilized world. Marcuse also did an amazing job discussing Hegel (*Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*) and revolution in one of his earlier works, though no one reads that now (as Hegel via Fukuyama has become the mascot of decadent Capital). Major Bellows attacked Fukuyama and I think did a good job critiquing the silly assertion that history stopped at the Battle of Jena.

Everything was fair game and few political zines were as eclectic or as snarltooth as *BLACK EYE*.

BLACK EYE was basically a lot of fun: a group of friends trying to figure it all out in a place of conviviality, open discussion, and support. *BLACK EYE* did its best to push post-left anarchism front and center, to make people aware that with the death of the Left, Life gets better, the chances for insurrection become more clear, and the ways and means to produce a human community that realizes the talents of each of its members develops as a real possibility. *BLACK EYE* was hard work; in the end it was worth it. I have gone on to write and edit several magazines, other collective members run art spaces, and one is still cranking out top-notch essays.

I will say I miss the whole thing, the late night discussions at the Veselka or Kiev restaurants, the smile of a friend as I describe some crazy theoretical gymnastics, and the pride of holding a hundred hot-off-the-xerox-machine *BLACK EYES* in my hands as I go to sell them in Tompkins Square Park.

But that was then, this is now. Our ideas still resonate with much of what the Social Enemy has up its sleeve, but new theorists are needed as Capital and the nation-state become ever more fearsome adversaries in the battle for real freedom.

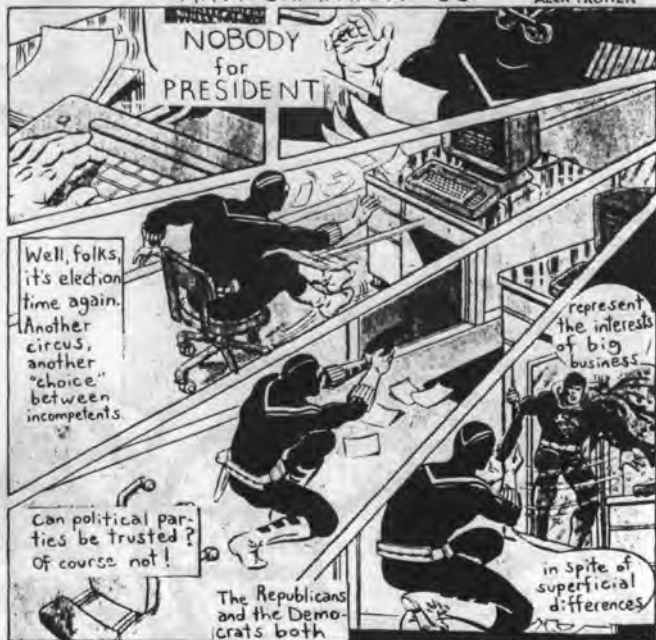
So I dedicate this *BLACK EYE* anthology to those of you who would take up the sword or the pen and make the writers and thinkers of *BLACK EYE* look like senile

reactionary codgers. For those willing to do so, the future is yours...

Elysburg, PA
August 2014

ANTI-CAMPAIGN '88

ALEX TROTTER



Diary of an Ex-Trot

Mary Shelley

The Characters

The BSP: Bad Socialist Party (or make up your own name from these initials!)

BS Today: the newspaper of the BSP

Dominant Faction: L.S., E.T., P.G. (branch leaders), et al.

Opposing faction: D.C., J.A., S.E., myself, et al.

The Anarchist Switchboard: Bill X., Joe, Dave, Bill, Mr. Paul, Laure, Jim, Melissa

The Scene

I had been a member of the B.S. Party for a year when I felt the first symptoms. A lecture, an article, and post-meeting arguments in the bar led me to swear to show the BSP they were wrong in their assessment of anarchism. To argue better, I read more, and the more anarchist books I read, the more I thought, "Hey, this is better than the B.S.P."

At the same time, a battle arose within the New York branch of the BSP. The dominant faction, encompassing the official leadership of the branch, badly wanted to shut up the discontented members (including me) who had formed a small opposing faction. Under the guise of proving that the leaders were instantly recallable, a mock election was held to give the opposition a chance to win office. After a solid

diary of an ex-trot

barrage of harassment from the leadership, the opposition was voted down. The winning faction then consolidated themselves into a branch committee, and the leaders of the losing faction were persecuted in public and in private.

While all this nonsense was going on, I was getting acquainted with an anarchist collective I had found, the Anarchist Switchboard. The hypocrisy of the BSP leaders, trying desperately to hold on to their positions, was horrifying, and the kindness and rationality of the anarchists were of great comfort to me. Gradually I realized that there was only one thing to do. . . .

The Diary

11/20 I love my comrades and it scares me that I am an anarchist, that I oppose them and what they say. I am an anarchist. I am an anarchist, I cannot deny it. "We carry a new world in our hearts."

11/21 I am an anarchist, I am an anarchist, and there is no cure.

1/13 D. (BSP member in another city) wrote an article in *BS Today* that gets anarchism completely wrong. I must do something to correct the BSP's view of anarchism.

1/14 Arguing with L.S. about anarchism is like beating my head against a brick wall. He is very authoritarian—in a revolution I might end up fighting against him.

1/19 I've been sitting here for four hours trying to write a response to the *BS Today* article about anarchism. I just wrote a little bit but I've got to put it away until tomorrow.

It's a big task and it's going to take a lot of courage to execute.

1/22 The branch meeting was cancelled because of the snow. This is the first time in ages that I wasn't with my comrades on Thursday night. I am reading *God and the State* and I'm really getting excited because I like it a lot and I agree with it. I wish I didn't think it was right.

1/23 Anarchism does not contradict Marxism, or negate it. Anarchism encompasses it. Marxism tells you how to change society, but anarchism tells you why. Marxism is a strategy, but anarchism is a philosophy—a truly communist society must be based on it. The more I read, the more I am convinced: I am an anarchist first.

1/29 At the branch meeting and beyond, there was much screaming and shouting and finger-pointing. I love D.C. and J. A.—I wish they wouldn't shame themselves with the way they argue.

2/5 McG. (my more or less objective Marxist friend) brought his friend N. to the meeting tonight. N. annoys the hell out of me, but he's partial to anarchists—and I need all the help I can get. To hell with responding to the *BS Today* article. I'm so fucking tired of arguing with the BSP over anarchism. It gets me so mad.

2/7 Hiding between the shelves at Saint Mark's Books, reading Kropotkin—*Conquest of Bread*—absolutely wonderful.

2/8 I'm reading *Homage to Catalonia*—it's good. I get tired of Orwell himself after a couple of pages, but Spain in

the 1930s is very interesting.

2/9 S.E. (member of the opposition) said it: I am an anarchist. I will embrace it and deny it no longer.

Anarchy!

2/10 L.S. is patronizing me—I think he had E.T. suss me out to see where my branch loyalties are. I resent this—that boy could use some Bakunin. I suppose the opposition flattered my anarchism by design last night, but I do appreciate being taken seriously for a moment and not being beaten back by argument. P.D. is giving lectures on anarchism—hold me back, I’ll brain him.

2/11 I just got off the phone with L.S.—I got him mad by quoting Bakunin at him. Serves him right.

2/26 I am so disgusted. At the end of a charade of a branch meeting we were voted down. I don’t think it’s settled because the existing branch leadership isn’t going to make things any better than before for D.C. and J.A. Now I know why I was confused about the branch committee proposal: it is a decentralizing concept that is being used by L.S., E.T., and P.G. to consolidate their power.

Then, after the meeting, E.T. panned *Mephisto*, a metaphorically political film, for not being blatant revolutionary socialist propaganda—for not “calling for a revolutionary party.” What an idiot. What am I doing with these people? Even the RCP has some fucking imagination about art.

Also—I have been in the BSP voluntarily and I do not want to hear about “discipline,” etc. I already went

through twelve years of Catholic school and I never want to deal with that shit again. They can kiss my anarchist ass.

2/27 Today I was thinking that I want to stop coasting and get serious politically. I want to know about the world. If the branch keeps on as it is, I can't continue to be a socialist much longer—I can be a poser, though. The time has come to stop fucking around.

3/5 At the branch meeting, I was fed up and bored. L.S. and company never cease to amaze me. Ecstatic dogmatics.

3/10 *I* am ecstatic, boy am I ever! The day began this evening when I went to the Anarchist Switchboard. Had a nice chat with the (weird) comrades. Offered to do a flyer for them—they took me up on it. Read Malatesta on the way home but it was just too exciting, really wonderful.

3/17 I was over at the Anarchist Switchboard tonight. Bill K. wasn't there, but Joe told me straight what the Switchboard is about. They are serious anarchists—they're not just fucking around. I started to panic—what have I gotten myself into?! It's just something new.

3/18 I met Bill K. from the Anarchist Switchboard this afternoon to give him the flyer. Over lunch in an atmospheric midtown dive I asked him eight million questions about anarchism, and got answers to seriously think about. I don't want to be "looking for a home on the left" (as McG. put it), but I want to know if anarchism

is a viable alternative.

3/19 It's almost 2:30am. I've done this before—it's hard for me to relax and sleep after BSP meetings. I think it's because it's becoming more and more clear to me that I'm not with them. I used to think that Marxism and anarchism could peacefully co-exist in my mind, but the actions of the BSP contradict the ideas of anarchism. I don't like how the BSP treat their members like stupid children. I left my parents' home once—I guess I have to do it again. I don't like thinking about leaving. The BSP were the first people to ever listen to me when I spoke, and to actually take me seriously. They will ever be in my heart for that. But I must think of my happiness and peace of mind.

3/20 Like so many other days, I felt awful (but gradually better) due to the BSP meeting the night before. I'm so tired of all the shit: L.S. and his complacency—you couldn't pry him out of his position with a tire iron. It's doing him no good.

3/21 Went to the Switchboard—Dave said, "Welcome home!" Bill K. is making copies of my flyer, and Bill M. asked me to help with a book discussion on Berkman's *ABC of Anarchism*. They are going out of their way "to make me feel that I'm a part of the place," and they are succeeding. Went home and painted an anarchist black star on the back of my jacket.

3/22 Tonight I told S.B. (member of the dominant faction) that I won't do my *BS Today* sale this weekend "because

I don't want to."

3/23 Went wheatpasting with the BSP, then went to the Switchboard for the anarchism study group, where my shyness and fatigue contributed to my not saying anything, though I would have like to. I always think of what to say after I've already left.

3/25 A.S. (member of the dominant faction who worked with me) had a bit to huff about when she saw me reading *Emancipation* on my break. The more they try to sway me, the more firmly I stand. Just think, I might never have pursued anarchism if they hadn't gotten up my ass about it.

3/27 Went to a screening of a film on women anarchists in the Spanish Revolution (*Mujeres Libres*). Unfortunately for me, the discussion afterwards was all in Spanish. Sat with the anarchists from the Switchboard but I'm still so damned shy that I can't talk to them. Paul asked me to do a flyer for the squatters demonstration on May Day.

3/31 Went to the Switchboard tonight and stayed a long time, though I had planned to go home early. I was able to talk a little more, so I felt good. I was terribly confused when I left. I don't know what I want. The fact that I'm so torn up over anarchism tells me that that's what is in my heart, not socialism. If I had any guts I'd leave the BSP instead of staying and pretending. If I had any guts I'd have become an anarchist long ago. Beckett: All always better too late than never.

4/1 I had a dream this morning that Alexander Berkman

was at the Switchboard, and he was agonizing over a decision he had to make. Joe, Bill, Dave, and everybody were standing around him, saying, “Don’t worry—try it and if you don’t like it you can always go back to them.” Berkman said, “No, you don’t know them. I can’t go back.” Now, what do you suppose that means?

All day, feeling increasingly better—I am an anarchist. At home, reading *ABC*—it’s beautiful, written by a person with heart and soul. I’m afraid to like it as much as I do—L.S. would say it’s ahistorical. Am I a failure as a Trotskyist? Then fuck it—I’ll be a success as a human being. It’s time to stop being afraid of espousing anarchism. Otherwise—afraid to feel, I will be condemned to think (Paraphrased from Anatole Broyard).

4/2 Felt a good deal of alienation at (and after) the branch meeting. I have lost patience with these anal retentives. I can’t sit through these meetings any longer.

4/4-5 Went to Chicago for the BSP national meeting and this is what I did: stood around at parties, was terribly confused, had a few brief moments of understanding, argued, was depressed, slept, ate meat for the first time in months, didn’t fuck G.P., felt unconnected to everyone, made myself aloof, was not talked to, and thought about the anarchists I left behind. I don’t know why I should stay in the BSP and deal with their shit. The discipline and theoretical narrowness that they say is called for to build a revolutionary party is not only unnecessary but stultifying for an individual. I have a life to live, comrades,

so excuse me while I go live it happily. @ is all.

4/20 I wheatpasted with some of the Switchboarders for three hours this evening. We had a lot of fun. We went all over the Village, rambling around and ripping it up. They bought me pizza. They are wonderful people.

5/1 This was my first May Day: I dressed in my black star jacket with a red and a black star pinned on the front. I went to Union Square to see what the CP was up to. I talked to old Howard, who hawks the *Daily World* around NYU. I ran into Bill K. and Laure and raised some hell—Jim had a video camera. Back at the Switchboard, I met Melissa, who is incredibly simpatica. Went to Tompkins Square Park for the squatters demo. Romped around the Maypole and had a blast.

Epilogue

Eventually, the BSP opposition faction dissolved: D.C., a member for eight years, was purged; J.A. moved back to his hometown; the rest were silenced. I, of course, quit. McG., hater of Trotskyites who nonetheless would later become a member of the BSP, reported to me that I had been explained away as a “politically lazy” “ultra-left abstentionist” who was “incapable of being a Marxist.” The new recruits are now nursing the branch committee’s bouncing baby egos.

This diary might give you the idea that I quit the BSP only because of personality differences or whimsy. This was not the case. I read many of the anarchist classics before I made the switch; the anarchists’ ideas proved to be more

logical and more humane on every question than the Marxists'. The anarchists I met showed pure ethical strength by actually living their ideals, by making real the new world that they carried in their hearts. After observing this I became one of the proud converts who could call themselves ex-Trotskyists.

You might think it's a particularly strange jump to make, from Trotskyist to anarchist, but it's really very simple. In most cases, it can be explained in one word: Kronstadt. Anyway, remember: the best part about being an ex-Trotskyist is the EX.

Puppy & Kitty Prison

Tek Luxx

Natalie entered Friendly's Pet Emporium to spend another of her lunch hours watching the animals. She had been coming to Friendly's every working day for the past three months, and by now she could not imagine ever not coming. It was such a pleasant respite from the mundane pressures working against her at the office. Today she was impatient to see a recently-arrived litter of kittens presently up for sale. Moments before she had been anxiously waiting up the block, waiting for Friendly to leave the

store to gorge himself at the diner on the corner. Leaning against the granite facade of the bank, Natalie was hating him and his foul, brutish manner. Under her breath she had called him names, things she would never be able to say to his face. She thought him crude, offensive, obscene. And he was mean to the animals. He was always puffing on big, fat cigars, and when Natalie first started coming by she had seen him blowing smoke into the animals' cages and flicking ashes into their water. Friendly disgusted her; he made her flesh crawl, she felt a biological repulsion, and physically could not bear his presence, but she loved the animals—the little puppies and kittens—so still she came by at the same time every day, when she knew Friendly would be gone to lunch.

Friendly was a high-pressure salesman. During Natalie's first visits he had always stood behind her while she looked at the animals, pressing his belly into her back, pretending there wasn't enough room, forcing her closer and closer to the cage. Breathing on her neck he had urged her to consider one animal or another, describing their particular virtues, and the joy a pet would bring to her empty life. Very quickly Natalie learned that Friendly didn't like browsers, another of the reasons she avoided him, for Natalie never came to buy.

Natalie strode to the cage containing the kittens she had taken an interest in. One of them was missing. Sold, she realized, and wondered about the price on its head. She gazed at those remaining, now curled into furry little

balls, fast asleep, dreaming of mice and trouble. She watched them breathe in their tiny cage, saw their round, tiny forms expand and contract. Friendly's assistant sat at the counter in the back, behind the cash register, reading a book on dog grooming. He paid Natalie no attention; he was used to her visits. This pleased her. She liked to be left alone with the animals, to silently commune with them, certain the animals appreciated her as a kind human.

Friendly's assistant was nicer than Friendly, and Natalie knew that he truly loved animals. But to work for a man like Friendly was something she could never forgive, and she harbored a secret resentment he probably never felt. She had seen that he did treat the animals well. He spoke to them gently and seemed to understand them. He and Natalie could never be friends, though, not unless he renounced Friendly and quit. She knew this would never happen. He was the sort that thought Friendly could be tamed and made nice, and would always think this, no matter that everything in his experience with Friendly should suggest otherwise.

Although a bit disappointed that the kittens were sleeping and not playfully scooting around, Natalie chose not to wake them, and turned to a cage containing three dogs born soon before she began stopping by. She had watched them grow over the months, noticed the disappearances of their brothers and sisters, and wondered what Friendly did with the puppies nobody wanted to buy. The runts of the litters; the dull-witted, homely ones; the

graceless; the disfigured; the ones without the charm to captivate the simplest, most innocent child. Were they put to sleep or exiled to some hidden dungeon? Did Friendly sell them on the cheap to unscrupulous butchers? Were they callously set free on the outskirts of town, their instinct for independence and survival and self-preservation eroded by centuries of domestication at the hands of men like Friendly?

Natalie shuddered, thinking of all the horrible possibilities. She pushed her finger through the narrow space between the bars of the cage. One of the puppies sidled over, a scrawny dog with one dead eye. He pressed his moist nose against her finger and she wiggled it around. He gently grabbed at it with his paws and teeth, enjoying the game. Natalie imagined him romping around some suburban backyard, chasing sticks and birds and insects; out of his cage; free of a leash; far, far away from Friendly. The little puppy rolled onto his back and Natalie began scratching his belly, imagining dogs and cats inhabiting huge metropolises abandoned by humans. The bell on the door rang, announcing the arrival of a prospective customer, and she was reminded that the puppies and kittens would never be their own masters.

A square-shouldered, aggressive woman with a powerful military stride entered, pulling along her young son by the hand.

"We've come for his dog," the woman bellowed to the assistant, who was beside her in a moment. He pushed

Natalie aside and apologized, then opened the cage, and grabbed the puppy with the one dead eye.

"This dog does have its papers, doesn't it?" the woman asked as the the assistant pulled the puppy out of the cage.

"He certainly does," he answered proudly, holding the squirming puppy to his chest and latching the door shut. "All our dogs are registered."

"Let me hold him, let me hold him," the little boy squealed, his arms outstretched.

Natalie looked at him closely and gasped. He appeared a miniature version of Friendly, but without the cigar. He stepped towards the assistant, still holding out his arms. Natalie was horrified to see he wore a button reading KISS ME, I'M FRIENDLY.

"Let me have him. Give him over," he demanded. The assistant obligingly passed him the puppy.

"Mine, mine, all mine," the little boy sang. His mother and the assistant walked towards the cash register to settle up business.

"Friendly said he'd give us thirty percent off because the dog is sickly and has a dead eye," Natalie heard the woman mention to the assistant.

"You belong to me," the little boy whispered, embracing the puppy with one arm. "Mine, mine, mine," he chanted, poking at the puppy's nose with his finger.

The little dog began gently snapping at the offending digit as it darted in and out towards his mouth. Watching the finger fly Natalie hoped the puppy would bite the little

boy. She imagined its teeth sinking softly into his flesh, cutting, grinding, tearing away, severing the finger from his hand. She saw the blood spurt out, saw the red around the dog's mouth, saw the droplets fall to the floor. She heard the little boy scream, his face twisting in shock, terror, and pain. He dropped the dog and began waving his injured hand, spraying blood everywhere, shrieking uncontrollably. His mother rushed to his side, upset at this simple purchase gone awry.

The puppy, with the finger still clenched in his mouth, darted past the advancing assistant and disappeared into the rear of the store. Natalie handed the mother a handkerchief and urged her to bring the boy to the hospital.

"The finger, I need the finger," she wailed, barely audible over the tormented screams of her son.

The commotion had roused all the dogs and they were barking furiously, frightening the kittens. Natalie slowly walked to the back of the store, opening the doors to all the cages as she went. By the time she reached the assistant all the puppies had escaped and were running around in madcap delirium, yipping and yapping. The little puppy with the one dead eye was laying peacefully on top of the back counter, having deposited the little boy's finger on the keys of the cash register.

The assistant stared at the bloody finger, stupefied, uncomprehending, seemingly unaware of the noise and animal chaos overwhelming the store. Natalie searched

the shelves below the counter for something to wrap the finger with. She discovered a zip-lock bag and delicately dropped in the finger. She handed it to the assistant. He blinked a few times, and then, like a zombie, carried the finger to the woman, still trying to calm her son.

The bell at the door rang and suddenly everything was quiet, except for the little boy's muted sobbing. Friendly stepped into his shop glaring, his face flushed from too much food and too many beers. The emancipated puppies retreated into their corners, somehow realizing the limits of their short-lived freedom.

"Get these dogs back in their cages," he ordered the assistant as he brusquely pushed past the woman and her son. He swaggered to the back of the store and glanced contemptuously at Natalie.

"How about an Abyssinian, missy?" he asked.

Natalie shook her head no.

"A fine pedigreed cat is the perfect pet for today's single woman," he reminded her.

Natalie remained silent. Friendly stepped behind the counter and roughly pushed the puppy down to the floor. Ignoring the blood on the keys he opened the cash register and began counting his money, his cigar clenched between stained teeth.

The assistant hesitantly approached him and pointed to the woman and her son.

"She says they don't want the dog anymore. They want their money back."

Friendly snorted and gestured to the sign hanging on the wall behind him. It stated ABSOLUTELY NO REFUNDS OR EXCHANGES.

“But, but, wh-what should I tell her?” the assistant stammered. “She said, she said that she would sue.”

Natalie watched Friendly’s face turn especially sullen and mean. He blew smoke into the assistants eyes.

“You tell her. . .you tell her..you tell her, caveat emptor.”

THIS TIME IT'S PERSONAL...



COPSOUT!

C.B. 3OUT!

YUPPIES.....OUT!

BUREAUCRATS.....OUT!

Out in the Park

Billy88

On Saturday night, July 30, a gathering was held in Tompkins Square Park to protest the gentrification-inspired closing of the park at 12am. The past few weeks have seen the guardians of financial investment, aka “New York’s Finest,” forcibly close Tompkins at midnight to all residents of the neighborhood. This all-too-familiar form of oppression, thinly veiled under the guise of protecting the community as a whole, has resulted in the harassment of the homeless who sleep in the park and all others who happen to be there at the time. Once again orders have been sent down from the top by police administrators who are under increasing pressure to “clean up” the East Village so as to make it more alluring to the city’s upscale population. The slick process of gentrification has been snaking its way through the streets of the Lower East Side for some time now with the battleground between wealthy building owners and lower-income residents constantly shifting. On Saturday night the front line moved to Tompkins Square Park.

At 11pm a varied crowd of about fifty people sat on benches and milled about listening to an impromptu jam session and poetry near the bandshell. A lone police car

out of the park

kept its distance while surveying the peaceful crowd. At about midnight the police, roughly thirty in all, converged on the scene while chants of “the park belongs to the people” rang out. With clubs drawn the proud men in blue selected their first victim, one of the musicians, who coincidentally (?) was at the center of the crowd’s attention (no one can accuse the cops of being unable to draw attention to themselves). The cops demanded to see his ID. He refused and was promptly slammed up against a tree. Another anxious cop swung his nightstick at the crowd, which was keeping a watchful eye on the situation. Outraged at the brutality, they began to hurl cans and bottles at the offending cops and the police—who had been waiting for the slightest provocation (so impatiently in fact that they acted first)—exploded into violence. They took to their feet, beating anyone and everyone in reach of their clubs. The people began to run in every direction with the cops in hot pursuit as reinforcements arrived. I saw a young woman lying on the ground shielding herself from the blows of a cop who had seemingly gone berserk. I grabbed her off the ground as the cop, not wanting to be denied his due, cracked his nightstick across my back a couple of times for good measure.

The attack by the police lasted for about a half hour until most of the crowd regrouped at the corners of 7th and St. Marks and along Ave. A. One “good” cop tried to quell an angry group I was part of by claiming the police were simply “following orders” (obviously, as if we thought they

had the brains to act on their own!) and therefore were not to blame. "Go to the Parks Commissioner," he suggested with mock concern. The crowd, who by now are sickened by years of authoritarian excesses and official excuses, exposed him for the liar he was, shouted accusations of police brutality and authoritarian abuse. As is now a matter of procedure the press and media dutifully arrived well after the police outrage. The guardians of truth immediately swarmed around a police sergeant who proceeded to give them the official version of the story, which they breathlessly recorded. Unfortunately some misguided persons decided to perform their circus acts for the anxious cameras, jumping up and down, shouting obscenities and other incoherent nonsense as the cameras diligently rolled.

About forty five minutes later the people marched back into the park reclaiming it for their own. A celebration began as garbage barrels were turned into makeshift drum sets and conversations focused on the actions of the police and plans for future actions. At least for one night the people won a victory over the police and the property owners but the war won't be over for a long time, with much more official violence sure to come. But Saturday, July 30, was a first step in reclaiming the neighborhood for its residents.

...and into the Streets

In what is being called the most violent clash between police and the community since the Vietnam War era, a protest called in response to the curfew imposed on Tompkins Square Park held on Saturday, August 6, turned into a six hour police riot. The blatant police brutality, captured on film, sent dozens to area hospitals and left hundreds of others with various injuries.

— No Police State—

About two hundred protesters gathered around the entrance of Tompkins on Ave. A at St. Marks at 11pm. While local squatters handed out fliers and several people spoke on gentrification and police violence over a broken megaphone, approximately one hundred cops gathered around the bandshell area surrounded by police brass, vans and horses in preparation for another attack (see previous article). At 11:15, a march began to wind its way through most of the park as protesters chanted “The Park Belongs To The People” and “No More Police State.” At midnight, as the crowd grew on Ave. A to about three hundred, the police beefed up their ranks to four hundred fifty, and a line of mounted police formed as tensions grew.

side note

I would like to mention that since the crowd would grow to unknown proportions (some estimates put it at seven

hundred) and the fact that it was separated into different pockets for the remainder of the night, that what follows is my personal account of the police riot and is not meant to be comprehensive.

— Over the Fences—

The NYPD, clad in riot gear and with clubs drawn, formed a wall in front of the main entrance to the park. Those inside the park encouraged those on the outside to climb “Over the Fence and Into the Park.” Dozens of people including myself climbed over the chest-high fence and entered Tompkins. The wall of blue then descended on us swinging clubs, and it was back over the fence and into the street where violence quickly erupted. I want to note here that the police claim they were pelted with bottles and bricks for fifteen minutes and that that is what caused the riot. To the contrary, a couple of bottles were tossed in their direction AFTER they staged, in full view of a large crowd, a particularly brutal arrest, featuring one cop severely restraining a young man by holding him in a head lock, sharply pushing a nightstick lengthwise against his throat. Moments after I was back on the street I met up with some nightsticks myself. A mounted cop knocked me down on the ground as three others rushed up and kicked and beat me with their clubs while one articulate officer shouted, “Get out of the neighborhood, you fucking scumbag!” I live on St. Marks. Fortunately I was able to get up and run. Others were not so lucky. The most vis-

...and into the streets

ible manifestation of the unnecessary brutality can be seen on the backs of the beaten. Captain Gerald McNamara of the 9th precinct assured the Press that nightsticks were used for “defensive purposes only.” Why then do so many have welts on their backs where they were struck by nightsticks? Is a person a threat when they are running away?

— Up and Down—

After being chased up to 1st Ave. the crowd descended back down to Ave. A where we were greeted by two police helicopters. The crowd mocked their presence by waving to them and applauding their performance. Moments later we were once again beaten back up to 1st Ave. where yet another attack took place.

— Bloody Encounters—

I spent the rest of the night on Ave. A from 6th street on down. The police occupied Ave. A from 9th St. to 6th St. No one was allowed in this area, not even residents. I witnessed two of the most violent episodes of the night about 2am. One woman who was viciously clubbed across the eyes lay screaming in a pool of blood. The police assured us that they had called EMS but when her friend got tired of waiting for them, he phoned and EMS said that the police had never called them. This is typical of the cops’ blatant indifference towards decency, especially on that night. I saw another man who had his eyelid sliced open by one of NY’s Finest. Outbursts of violence occurred

throughout the night until dawn. At about 6am the cops dispersed as a group of protesters marched back into the park and others made their way home.

— Aftermath—

The following night a march was held and on Monday there was a community meeting. Koch lifted the curfew as the NYPD is being attacked by the Press, Media, and Community. Cover-ups are sure to follow as all those responsible attempt to hide and shift the blame. The issue of gentrification and the sterilization of the Lower East Side remains in every conversation. The participants in the police riot exchange stories as the Media and Press become more and more scarce. Some have filed complaints; most have not. The people understand that the park is just part of the larger problem. But the neighborhood has grown stronger, more united. There will be an attempt to have the people run the park themselves. A step in the right direction.

Why Did the Cops Try to Close Tompkins Square Park?

Joe Braun

The police-instigated riots of July 30 and August 6 show that they were willing to take extreme measures to keep

why did the cops try

residents out of the park, including the use of riot gear, horses, and helicopters. Why is it so important to them?

The first thing we must realize is that the cops themselves, while clearly enjoying a chance to break some heads, don't have the brains or the independence of mind to do anything except take orders. They didn't know why they were there. They were probably given some pep talk about the city being taken over by radicals and anarchists (meaning us—the residents of the area), and then given a free rein to act like the animals that they are. The orders come from higher up, possibly Benjamin Ward or Mayor Koch himself.

When these actions are viewed in the context of other authority-asserting actions the city has taken, the motive becomes much more clear. In recent years, street peddlers and licensed vendors have been banned; certain musical instruments have been banned from the parks (drums, wind instruments, electric instruments, etc.); cabaret laws have been enforced, effectively banning jazz in all clubs except those that could afford a cabaret license; graffiti has been criminalized; local bands and promoters have been prosecuted for wheatpasting their fliers; the police have occupied and closed other parks in the city, and long-established neighborhoods have been destroyed, residents displaced.

We live in a society governed by big business and the dollar. When local people begin to develop a cultural, social, and economic life independent of the mainstream

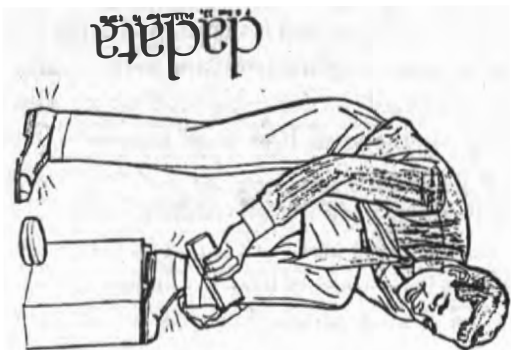
marketplace, this is a great threat to those interests and the government that thrives on them.

What we are being told is that if we want to promote our bands we must pay for advertising in the *Village Voice* or some other establishment press but if we try wheatpasting, we will pay the fines. If we want to make a living we must get a regular job with a boss, but if we try to be self-sufficient through peddling or vending, they will confiscate our merchandise and put us in jail. If we want to enjoy ourselves, if we want to hear live music, we must pay \$20-50 to go to an established cabaret or concert hall. If we want art, we must go to a museum. If we want to dance or just hang out, we must either go to the World or the Palladium or to a bar where we must either pay to get in or pay for drinks once we are inside. If we can't afford that then go home and watch TV but STAY OUT OF THE PARK OR YOU WILL PAY WITH YOUR HEAD! And if we can't afford to live in Manhattan, MOVE!

The only real power that government can have is power over its subjects. When people begin to live outside the realms of this power it constitutes the single biggest threat to government and big business, and they realize that.

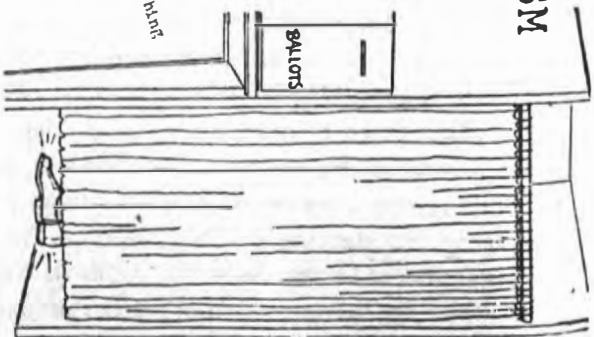
This is why it so important to continue peddling, playing music, dancing in the streets, wheatpasting, writing graffiti, and especially HOLDING ON TO TOMPKINS PARK, which has become the front line in the struggle for individual liberty, equality, and social, cultural, and economic independence.

ELECTORAL FETISHISM



*First I'll vote
then go bowling*

*like a sheep
in wolf's clothing*



'.... democracy is too often confused
with an electoral ceremony.'

EdUARdo GALEANO

I Am Not A Woman

I AM NOT A WOMAN

—or—

THOSE WHO FULFILL A REVOLUTIONARY STEREOTYPE MAKE
A STEREOTYPICAL REVOLUTION (HAR,HAR)

Mary Shelley

I am not a woman. I am one of those “maleized” people Sunshine D. refers to in her article in *BE* #3 (“Anarchism Without Adjectives/Feminism Without Apologies”). When I think of myself, I do not automatically think: female, twenty four years old, american, atheist, anarchist, or (god knows) secretary. Rather, I am a being, a potentiality, a force. I am an androgyne who can always be found with those who've got their mothers in a whirl. What points do I have to argue with Sunshine D.?

Sunshine D. writes of ideas such as swapping dominant ideologies; leveling down; equality implying sameness; creating what already exists; control over one's own life being given back by an elaborate society created by others; conspiracy theories, etc. By clinging to such “musty creeds and exploded absurdities” (as my old man, Godwin, put it), she is in danger herself of being compared to—alternately—the leveling, dominating M-Ls (actually meaning Marxist-Leninists); over-simplifying, 1984-type hysteria-heads; those who said that if the ERA were passed

i am not a woman

we would have to use co-ed toilets; and other sillies. Her ideas on what one's place is—based on gender and sexuality—testify to what extent the ideas of Freud and Queen Victoria (whose views are widely disparate though from the same era) have become institutions.

She writes: “Stop playing the destructive game that sells you that humanism is somehow different from, and more superior [sic] to, feminism.” Would she mind running that by one more time and explaining it, maybe? Aren't we all humans regardless of gender? It is more useful to promote the emancipation of all people from our created oppressions (environmental as well as economic, ideological as well as political), than to reemphasize the lines that splinter the wholeness of our humanity and restrict our expression to what is appropriate for our “roles:” You are a woman, of color, a lesbian, an anarchist, and therefore you do such and such a thing as Sunshine D. would prescribe.

Diversity (among people) exists. It does not need to be “created,” as Sunshine D. advocates. It is the proclamation of the difference that counts, not its artificial “creation,” because freedom is something we forge ourselves, individually, and not something endowed on us by a dominant ideology, new or not. Education for racists, sexists, homophobics, and the like, is, naturally, necessary. Though I don't know how Sunshine D. would propose this be done, I believe it would be done most effectively by asserting our selves and living out our dreams.

I believe that I can't be free until the ones next to me

are free, but the ones next to me reach all around the world. The question is, how can we free ourselves? It is not by fulfilling a revolutionary stereotype, but rather by busting out—expressing your self. It takes no small amount of strength and courage to do this: both to know and accept one's self, and to show it to the world, not flinching at the reaction it may elicit.

Sunshine D. doesn't "want to be equal," only separate. I refuse to be separate, unequal (though I know that all humans and other creatures are equal owing to their aliveness), or simply *different* due to the difference in my sex. Sexual polarization is a custom, not an instinct, and I will not be defined or confined by gender. Femininity will not dictate my opportunities for expression and fulfillment. I am not a woman, and I'm not a man. I am a human being. Blame it on the anarchist in me.

Finding an Enemy on a Rainy Day in Philadelphia

Edwin Hammer

It seemed many of the people traveling to Philadelphia for the Klan bash secretly hoped the white racists would show, despite the fact that it was known they didn't have a per-

mit and were unlikely to assemble without police protection. From friends in Philly we learned some groups had advocated boycotting the counter-demonstration, and the whole affair began to look a bit less attractive. Nevertheless, with the craven attack by four skinheads on a young couple and their baby in New York still on many people's minds with the recent news of George Bush's ties to former Nazis and Nazi sympathizers having little or no impact on the majority of the public, and with the alarming right-wing government now in power (and oblivious to the needs and desires of massive numbers of people as it continues to squeeze individuals through creeping totalitarianism), many could not resist the opportunity to possibly face the rank-and-file fascists and the leaders spouting their hateful rhetoric. Many wanted to face these most-primitive advocates of force and coercion, to jeer and sneer and punish them for their authoritarianism; their unashamed and naked instinct for domination; their flagrant contempt for individuals and nonconformists, and their intolerance for difference in race, ethnicity, sexuality, and appearance. For all these reasons many wanted to face and fight these enemies of freedom and individual sovereignty, and to declare anger and outrage for the authoritarianism and hatred they promote.

White Pride Day in Philadelphia, the city of Brotherly Love, was organized by the US League of Christian Patriots. On the advice of the authorities, their celebration of white supremacy was canceled due to the threat of violence. The

counter-demonstration was organized by the Partisan Defense Committee, the All People's Congress, and the Worker's World Party, self-proclaimed representatives of "the people" and "the workers" (can anyone buy those mailing lists?). My friends and I overslept and were afraid we missed the fascists. When we arrived at Independence Mall, home of the Liberty Bell, we were greeted by a sullen, solemn, and mute phalanx of men guarding the rally from undesirables. They prevented us from entering, and when I asked why, I was answered with silence and the contemptuous stare of a man who has been given his orders and ain't talking, relishing the the authority the organizers awarded him. After convincing somebody we weren't fascists we were admitted to the counter-demonstration and learned that the nonconformists in our group had made the security guards nervous, as they were unaccustomed to "people with alternative lifestyles", as no doubt they are unaccustomed to nonconformity, genuine uniqueness, and individuality in all their forms. People like this, with a narrow range of experiences and a limited knowledge and appreciation for the diversity of individuals, are often recruited to play guard dog—by the state in defense of capitalists and bureaucratic enterprises, and by organizers in an attempt to defend "their" event from the inappropriate and unwanted. Like my friends, a number of nonconformists and people whose appearance suggested an "alternative lifestyle" were harassed and initially prevented from joining the counter-

demonstration; some of them were even accused of being skinheads, despite their obvious mohawks or shaggy mops of hair. This was gravely insulting as a few of these people, some of them punks, others defying or refusing categorization, are themselves sometimes subjected to skinhead abuse, violence, and invective. These security clowns had not even mastered the easiest and most important tool for vigilance: Know your enemy. Eventually four skins from Maryland arrived and the gallant soldiers successfully protected the rally from race hatred, right-wing authoritarianism, and rabid intolerance.

There were many vanguardist parties and groups in attendance at the rally. Besides Worker's World and their front groups, the Spartacists were there, and the RCP, all with their faithful minions dutifully hawking their party's papers like peanuts at the ballgame. Bolshevik Tendency was there, along with their paper *1917*, advocating a bold, old twist on vanguardism: they are an earnest and disciplined group of revolutionaries anxious to lead the proletariat into the past, into a mausoleum made of crusty ideas and dusty critiques, a structure whose foundation is the dogmas of men long dead. Over time the roof has begun to leak. The methodologies this house-of-horrors offers are incapable of fully explaining the sophisticated, complex, and mediated social relations now dominating the lives of individuals everywhere. Bolshevik Tendency is a real-life caricature of vanguardism. They epitomize the willing enslavement of the Marxist-Leninoids to the nineteenth cen-

tury. They have forsaken the future and embraced an ignominious history. Remember Kronstadt!

I was told that for many of these groups this was their big event for the year, a chance for them to set aside their factionalism and bickering and join together, united against racism and the emerging neo-fascism—a monstrous ideology that certainly threatens the vanguardist schemes for hitching an easy ride into positions of power and control (by exploiting the liberatory impulse of working men and women, students, and anyone else angry and disgusted with the existing corrupt society).

Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice (SHARP) were at the rally. They declared themselves to be hard-working, tax-paying, patriotic American citizens, and urged people not to crucify all skinheads for the actions of a few bad apples. They claimed to be skinheads because they merely “like the style.” Indeed, not all skinheads are racists: some are equal-opportunity fascists, willing to fraternize with black and hispanic skinheads distancing themselves from the bigotry inherent in right-wing extremism—but nevertheless embracing the shibboleths of god and country, and glorying in the cult of the strong over the weak and vulnerable. These bozos are knaves and fools, for that reason doubly dangerous.

Fascism is a threat to all freedom-seekers, libertarians, and liberationists. It is now in the process of exchanging its masks, replacing robes and hoods with suits and ties; raising money, organizing, lobbying for their foul credos,

and maintaining military training camps instead of merely strutting about pompously in ridiculous Nazi uniforms. Membership in the Klan is actually dwindling, although groups with more respectable names like the US League of Christian Patriots and the New Aryan Resistance pick up the slack and attract individuals reluctant to join traditional racist and fascist organizations like the Klan and the Nazi Party, This is fascism at the grass-roots assuming its friendlier face.

I encountered no liberal groups at the rally, although I'm sure there were individual liberals around, not announcing themselves. I learned later that some officials from the NAACP were there and spoke, denouncing racism and bigotry, and demanding the institution create or sustain liberal programs designed to treat the frightening symptoms of a severe social decay. It is unnerving that only a handful of anarchists, a smorgasbord of communist parties and their front groups, and a few non-aligned leftists and liberals came out to protest right-wing extremism and its proliferation. The organizers claimed a thousand people attended but this is a gross exaggeration; there were no more than five hundred people there, and that's being generous. I was disappointed by the low turn-out, due to my own naivete. I honestly expected more liberals and liberal organizations to show. Perhaps the drizzly rain scared some off, or the fact that the counter-demo was organized by the Worker's World Party and their front groups. Since the white supremacists were unlikely to

show perhaps they thought their attendance unnecessary. They may very well have been right.

The organizers and various speakers claimed the rally a victory because the racists were intimidated and canceled White Pride Day. But there was nothing celebratory about this event, and there certainly was no victory. There wasn't even a battle. What happens if they throw a war and no one comes? Sorry leftists are left listening to conventional denunciations of racism and exhortations to build solid organizations with strong leaders willing to battle for "the people" and "the workers" in the political arena. No one I heard made any connections between the US government and the resurgence of a grass-roots fascism: for example, the secret government that came to light through Iranscam/Contragate, and FEMA (especially those contingency plans that would detain and incarcerate practically everyone attending the rally, and thousands more). No mention was made of the ideological and political proximity of many Reagan-appointed functionaries to low-profile fascist organizations. No one mentioned the machiavellian machinations of corrupt politicians, bureaucrats, and ruthless capitalists thirsting for profit and enrichment, predicated on a docile and undemanding population. Fascism is a complex phenomena, and is many things to different people, one of which is a state that threatens and militarily dominates its own citizens, "the people" (individuals). Fascism in power is martial law. No mention was made of this at the rally.

The Worker's World Party demands No Free Speech to Racist Hate-Mongers. If this is an appeal to the government, it is folly. If it's their party line it betrays their authoritarian and repressive tendencies. One must assume that if Worker's World were to ever gain power (rest easy, they won't) they would fill volumes with such legislation and decrees, in the interest of "the people" and "the workers," of course. No man, woman, or organization capable of demanding No Free Speech for anyone or anything can ever claim to represent me, as a "people" or as a worker. Those who do are expropriators and thieves, engaging in the worst sort of larceny. The objective reality of the Marxist-Leninist ideology many of these groups place their faith in, are state communist nations which have stolen individuals and imprisoned them behind borders for decades and decades. These regimes have been brazenly contemptuous of human rights and individual sovereignty, and are threatened by anything independent of their control. There has never been a state communist nation that was not hostile to individuals. There is no place for individuals in their abstracted ideology. There is nothing liberatory about Worker's World or other revolutionary parties or vanguardist groups. They have nothing in common with freedom. They are a false opposition, their leaders seek merely to propel themselves into a position of power where they can assume the roles of a bureaucratic elite with the privileges and prestige enjoyed now by the ruling elites presently sapping society

for all they can before it finally collapses. These agents of their own destruction are the gluttonous capitalists and techno-managers at the helms of massive multinational corporations that dominate and degrade the lives of individuals everywhere. They are aided and abetted by a hypocritical and self-serving class of professional politicians who routinely market their influence and power to Political Action Committees, corporations, and wealthy individuals—a legalized form of graft and a blatant betrayal of the “people” they supposedly represent: a poke in the eye to the deluded fools harboring unrealistic and sentimental notions of good and honest government.

These politicians and business leaders have collaborated in creating an environment in which wealth becomes concentrated in a narrowing segment of the population, a privileged minority: owners and managers of the hungry and acquisitive multinational corporations that control the production and distribution of a wide variety of necessary goods and services. Many of these large corporations are heavily indebted to the banks that financed their merger and acquisitions manias, and are subject to the scrutiny and calculation of finance capital's elite cadres: bankers, brokers, lawyers—deal-makers and wheel-greasers all. This redistribution and continuing de-democratization of wealth should be alarming not only to anarchists and socialists, but also to state libertarians and liberals, free-market enthusiasts as well as main street boosters. Racism eventually serves the needs of capital. The militarization of the economy in the name of national

defense secures markets and profits for the high-tech industrialists and the banks and finance houses that subsidize, with interest, the government's involvement in multi-billion dollar projects. The militarization of society attempts to ensure a patriotic and nationalistic population, willing to bear the austerity and discipline required by the perpetuation of massive defense spending—in the interest of national security, naturally.

The cycles of recession and inflation being predicted by many leftist doomsayers will continue to erode the living standards of many people who are already squeezed and impoverished and realizing the precariousness of their situation. Fascist groups like the US League of Christian Patriots, the New Aryan Resistance, the Nazi Party, and the KKK exploit the apprehension and frustration many of these individuals feel about their futures and the lack of control they have over their own lives. These racist hate groups stir up the foulest energies born of desperation. Gross racial and ethnic chauvinism must be battled and alternatives presented to individuals who are predisposed to the facile ideology and bigoted programs these groups articulate. The growth of this anti-human movement must be prevented and its activities stopped. A mass-based fascist movement extolling racial purity and domination could provide the necessary political support for an authoritarian and militaristic government willing to employ openly-repressive methods to maintain order and protect the profits of the massive, well-diversified corporations and the banks greedy for the interest earned

through deficit spending.

If this sort of political environment were to emerge in the next few years it could become impossible to advance the anarchist ideal and awaken the anti-authoritarian instinct in people throughout this sleeping land. The sick longing for political repression by some Revolution Now! radicals, consonant with their irrational fantasies of immediate revolutionary apocalypse, although suggesting an understandable impatience and potent desire for social change, also demonstrates an unwillingness to acknowledge the sophistication and complexity of the modern state apparatus. The elites of the western nations have learned techniques of totalitarianism from their counterparts in the East Bloc, just as Jaruzelski got a few pointers in breaking strikes from Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. This is not 1933! The new totalitarian state will possess much more effective tools and techniques for social control and repression. The men and women whose activities are the state, from top to bottom, merely await their orders. The machinery is in place.

Many radicals are expecting this repression and differ only in their speculations as to its estimated time of arrival. Some advocate engaging in actions to expose the authoritarian face of present government. Such activities are often appropriate and beneficial, depending on the time, place, and circumstances. However, if repression comes down too hard too fast too soon, before we've expanded networks and established resilient and flexible

associations independent of the state and the dominant reality, we may be doomed, unable to mount a mass resistance, intimidated into collaboration or exile, or tossed into prison camps and detention centers. Another opportunity to realize anarchy will be postponed, perhaps for a hundred years, maybe more. I hope many more people will see that it is once again time to become “premature anti-fascists.”

After escaping the rain and the rally with a couple of friends for coffee and breakfast, we returned to find Independence Mall empty. An impromptu march had been orchestrated and the counter-demonstrators were parading through the streets of Philadelphia. We ran to catch up, afraid of missing a fight with the fascists, if that's where they were heading. Out of breath, we searched for our friends and fell into line. A woman with a mike and a mobile PA led the marchers in the usual repertoire of chants. That old gem *The People United Will Never Be Defeated* was enjoyed for quite a long, long while before she lurched radically into *No Justice, No Peace*—as the marchers marched peacefully behind the counter-demo's leaders and organizers, occasionally blocking traffic for a few minutes and eliciting uncomprehending stares from people who won't make it into the streets until it's way too late. A few people tried to riff on the chant themes but the uniformity and volume of the others drowned them out and prevented the discovery of anything original or amusing in the way of protest chants. The leaders and

organizers must have noticed this deadening monotony; eventually some percussion was introduced to liven up the ranks. After all, this was a victory march.

There were many cops there, of course, just like in New York. There were cops photographing and filming the anti-fascists, close up and from far away; cops on horses; cops who marched with the protest while other cops stood by as the march moved past. There were sergeants, lieutenants, and maybe even captains scurrying about, most with walkie-talkies. There were even cops marching with the organizers, determining the course of the march. I didn't notice very many people I thought might be under-cover cops. They weren't necessary.

I drifted through the marching crowd and walked along with different friends. Most were becoming bored and restless. Nobody seemed to know where we were going or why. Some assumed we weren't marching anywhere, that we were just out to declare our anger and outrage to the citizens of Philadelphia. The lack of spontaneity was getting everybody down. *No Justice, No Peace.*

We marched past a building being demolished so I paused to take a few snapshots. A huge ball smashed into the side of an aged building that was already half destroyed. A buoyant cloud of dust rose up as tons of debris plummeted to the ground. Before the dust had settled the massive ball was poised for another blow. I stood transfixed and excited, my camera in hand, then noticed that everyone had passed me by.

I made my way to the head of the march. A few anarchists, anti-authoritarians, and non-aligned riff-raff had positioned themselves in front of the lead banners belonging to the Worker's World Party and its front groups, the Partisan Defense Committee and the All People's Congress. I joined them there.

Some of the militants had discovered that it was the police who were dictating the course of the march, not the organizers (let alone the marchers themselves). They were angry and shot looks of disgust at the organizers listening to the police giving permission to turn left or right or pass through the intersection. I entered the ranks of party plebs carrying their party banners and party placards to search out the weary and urge the frustrated to join those up front.

When I returned to the front the march had stopped and a small crowd had gathered. A mask of Ronald Reagan was affixed to a stick and set afire, then raised high. It fell to the ground in flames and an American flag was immediately torched and thrust up for the crowd to see. It was joined there by several black flags as the mini-mob cheered and chanted *No Symbols No States*, regrettably, nobody brought a Soviet flag to fry. This would have really infuriated the Worker's World Party faithful, especially those who remembered or knew that Worker's World was born of a factional split within the Socialist Worker's Party in 1957 over the "correct line" on the Soviet invasion of Hungary. The faction that emerged to become the Worker's World Party supported the Soviet invasion, a brutal act of

imperialism as barbaric as the domination and policing of Central and South America by the US. From the moment it was conceived the Worker's World Party was the enemy of the workers and people they had the audacity to claim to represent and lead. Worker's World was born of a foul-smelling brew made of mendacity and hypocrisy. In choosing their name they degraded language and truth; Worker's World is one more Orwellian nightmare made real. The history of the Worker's World Party begins with their advocacy of Soviet force, coercion, and military domination. All in the name of "the workers" and "the people."

Less disturbing than this, but perhaps worse, nobody brought a Confederate flag to burn! Now that's what I call poor planning, especially at an anti-Klan protest. An opportunity lost for a glorious pyre in the sky with three of the foulest flags ever and a few black flags thrown in to confuse the statists, nationalists, and flag-waving patriots.

The cops looked on with their usual distaste. The organizers too were sour-faced, and no doubt unnerved. It looked like a few people might almost start to have a little bit of fun at this grimly tedious victory march, the organizers might lose control of "their people" if any spontaneity were to spread. And the antics of these misfits and mischief-makers might very well destroy the five seconds of media time the organizers were counting on, their only real chance of communicating with the people and workers they desperately ache to lead into state communist dictatorship. Besides, these political free agents, undisci-

plined and erratic, impulsive and free-thinking, could ruin the credibility the organizers had with the police and the city authorities. The organizers knew what had to be done and attempted to do it. Once again, it was time to purge the undesirables.

The marchers stood diligently behind their placards and banners at the edge of the intersection, and waited for orders. The mini-mob spread out a little, and a swastika scrawled on a placard was set alight, but failed to burn (a disquieting suggestion that in truth there was no victory over fascism that day).

The marchers and their banners moved forward a few feet, behind the unruly lot of individuals. I was pushed gently and told to make room for the march. I noticed a few others similarly approached, but nobody moved because the march was still stationary. The organizers employed their security force, a sort of avant vanguards who attempted to disperse the misfits. After some chaotic pushing and shoving I somehow ended up behind a quickly-formed blockade partitioning the irresponsible elements from the disciplined corps behind the banners. The undesirables were ordered to get behind the Worker's World banners or to clear out of the streets; for most of them this was no choice. Hoping to create a hole for the others to pass through I attempted to separate two members of the blockade. An argument immediately ensued and I was surrounded by these angry defenders of the march. I was tumbled about, pushed this way and that, and then in a

flash realized I was about to be thrown over to the boys in blue. Suddenly I was yanked in the opposite direction by a friend and comrade, thus avoiding becoming the first arrested. One of the police brass noticed my fortunate fate and ordered me out. Another cop asked me what was going on. "Some of us don't like marching behind communist banners," I told him.

The defenders of the march succeeded in having two anarchists arrested. At least one unarrest was attempted, but failed. There were too many cops and communists and too few anarchists. Not wanting to be singled out by the security force for more of their abuse I decided to return to the march and let any who cared know that the Worker's World Party was throwing people over to the police.

After alerting a few people to this sordid fact I heard the woman on the PA announce the arrests. *The police are arresting some of us*, she claimed. *They are arresting us and trying to divide us. Don't let the police divide us! We must be united!*

This immediate revisionism blew my mind. *You're a liar!* I hollered. *You're a liar! A liar!*

Her: *Don't let the police divide us! We must stand united behind our leaders!*

Me: *No leaders! and you're a liar!*

I was approached by a couple of the burlier party members. They tried to quiet me down and were non-plussed when I told them the organizers and their security force were having people they didn't like arrested. Once

confident I would not start screaming again they left. I lit a cigarette and watched the minions parade past. They had no idea what had happened at the front of the march. All they knew is what the woman with the PA told them.

The Cops and the Klan Go Hand in Hand she began chanting, and the minions followed with a united chorus of the same. I could only shrug sadly. Finally a connection was made between the government and fascism, but it was in the wrong context, and its function was to turn the leaders' lies into a truth for their followers. The People United Will Never Be Defeated.

I met up with a friend and he urged me to cut out. It was getting ugly and this march was not worth going to jail for. He disappeared into the march to warn others and I looked for some of the people I came with. Unable to find anyone I headed back to Independence Mall and encountered a large group of cops standing by in riot gear. I took a peek at the Liberty Bell and at the tourists and patriots, then finally ran into people I knew and gathered with others at Wooden Shoe.

That night we commiserated in comradely fashion, discussing the day's events, and deriding that dastardly Worker's World Party. For those who noticed, its authoritarian face was exposed and its instinct for revisionism revealed. Perhaps there are a few lessons for anarchists and non-aligned leftists in this sorry story. The most obvious is that no anti-authoritarian has to look far to find an enemy.

Our anger for the Worker's World Party gradually subsided but was not forgotten. We laughed and traded stories all evening, enjoying the warmth and easy hospitality of our hosts. I had a hard time falling asleep that night, and thought of all the reasons I had for being an anarchist.

\$00.75

SOCIETY IS A
CARNIVOROUS
FLOWER



BLACK EYE No.5

The Organization's New Clothes

(including THE BIRTH OF DOMINATION, GANG THEORY, GANG FACT, and THE PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF SNARLING)

Paul Z.Simons

Capital as a social mode of production realizes (the real) domination when it succeeds in replacing all the social and natural pre-suppositions by the correct forms of organization that mediate the submission of the whole of physical and social life to its real needs of valorization.

"On Organization"

Gianni Collu and Jacques Camatte

Organizations are not socially organic nor are they particularly obvious. The rise of the organization is hinted at throughout history, yet its growth and proliferation as a form does not occur until the ascendancy of capital. These developments are not isolated. Organizations are a result of the dominant mode of production and the division of labour. Further, the so-called "revolutionary" organization

the organization's new clothes

is an unequivocal contradiction, inasmuch as the existence of such a group is negated and simultaneously recuperated by the system it seeks to destroy, namely capitalism.

Though beyond the scope of this essay, the history of the organization would provide insight into its linkage with real domination. It is essential, however, to look at the birth of the organizational form. The moment of development for the proto-organization was a pregnant one. Contained within it were two devices that enabled the ascendancy of capital. The first, spatialization, is directly related to and a consequence of the second, the hierarchization of activity. The rise of the proto-organization, perhaps typified by the emergence of religion, required new physical and social forms to accommodate it.

Spatialization, the division of space in order to facilitate separateness, was of primary importance to the organization in realizing its genesis. The displacement of an activity from tribal common areas may be seen as one of the first steps towards the extreme division of all space apparent in contemporary dominant culture. The process of spatialization came into its own during the mid-eighteenth century with the forced removal of the workplace from the cottage to the factory. The delineation and definition of space thus enabled the domestication and control of unruly working populations via the discipline of the factory. Perhaps more to the point, it still does. The Yoruba express this concept best, the phrase in

Yoruba for "this country has become civilized," translates literally to "this earth has lines on its face."

The hierarchization of activity, the concept exemplified by the various ceremonies and rigors of the group as well as the historical development of the scribe (proto-bureaucrat) whose function is to record and "elevate" the activity of the organization above the day to day activity of leisure, food production, etc., is indicative of the role of the organization in the culture of domination. This tendency finds its logical conclusion in the designation of leadership in many groups under the title of General Secretary or vice versa. The control of "records" and "minutes" translates historically to the control of people.

The modern organization is less an accumulation of its history than it is a denial of it. The condensation of capital into larger conglomerates made up of smaller and more disparate unconnected corporations has directly mirrored what the modern organization is. The mystification of capital as monolith is slowly losing its resonance as ultra-centralized conglomerates degenerate into mechanisms for profit-extraction by elites. The mega-corporation is a trophy and a purse, nothing more. The eruption in the overnight courier services is no fluke. Capital is becoming more reliant upon external communication systems as a means of shoring up this increasingly fractured state. The concomitant ascendance of factory and middle management cliques reinforces the impression that twilight is near (there is a certain amount of irony that the

midwives of capital may well become its pallbearers). Currently the top-level executive is a snivelling bootlicker, the marketing specialist a beast of prey.

In their essay (cited above), Collu and Camatte express this concept in the precise though shadowy terminology of the gang and its larger counterpart, the racket. The gang provides not only structure but the necessary mediation between capital and society. This process, which Collu and Camatte describe as "caricaturization," portrays the boss/leader (or his clique) as traditional individual(s) and the collective form (or business) as a community based upon common interest. These masks, apparent in all organizations, do not in fact obscure reality, they are reality, inasmuch as they hide what does not exist. The gang fulfills another purpose, it replaces human presuppositions between members with the presuppositions of capital, particularly the division of labour.

The political gang varies only slightly, in that it absorbs the commodity into itself. The programme becomes at once producer and product with the ultimate aim of seduction (and of course in order to seduce successfully it must be "better" or "improved" in comparison to the manifestos of other groupings). The political gang puts forth positions in its newspapers, leaflets, and broadsides (usually concerning black, Hispanic, third world, or gay liberation) with the essential purpose of mediating the immediate. The ideologue asks us to see certain oppressions and to respond to them. This

appeal always demands that the view and response to oppression be that of the accepted ideology. The gang, however, can only criticize the artifacts of capital, not what it is, nor how to extirpate it. To do so would raise the question of its own existence.

At the moment of admission to the gang a process of binding begins. The novice becomes attached to and dependent on the gang by all the social presuppositions of capital. If s/he shows any capacity at all for a necessary skill, it is exploited and exchanged for recognition or, in extreme cases, absorption into the ruling clique. In the absence of a useful capacity, exchange occurs on the level of dissemination of the gang's viewpoint in return for lesser rewards (i.e., acceptance). It is important to be aware of the fact that ultra-left organizations—in their attempted rejection of this mechanism—only delay its implementation, not its impact.

Theory is impoverished, if not negated, by the gang. The fact that certain members of any gang will be more capable of confronting theoretical questions, and hence their authority in such matters will be relied upon, speaks directly to the dominant cultural valuation of the importance of belonging as opposed to knowing. This phenomenon of the organization is not new, the Scottish Rite of the Freemasons (circa 1680) is composed of thirty three levels of knowledge. Only by attaining the thirty-third level does the member come to know what the other thirty two levels (and the Masonic brotherhood as a

whole) represent. Thus theory is removed from individual analysis, it becomes in a very real sense the property of the intellectual clique and as such is recuperated as ideology.

The gang, particularly the self-proclaimed structureless gang, maintains “hygienic” mechanisms for the purging of individuals or sub-gangs whose activities or theory deviates from the accepted. The ultimate threat of the gang is exclusion. Politically this mechanism usually takes the form of rejection and embarrassment. If an individual refuses to leave after being denounced, it is only a question of time before psychological devaluation forces the final break. This “blackmail” is reflexive; not only does it eliminate the heretic, it also enforces adherence to orthodoxy.

The gang in all its forms is characterized by a cyclic pattern. As old gangs lose members and die, new gangs are established and begin to define and separate themselves from the has-beens. This process points to the dependency of the gang upon recognition. The more that a gang appears in the limelight, the greater the possibility of disseminating its views and attracting new members. Thus the organization not only commodifies itself through its programme and activities, it valorizes humanity as consisting solely of potential converts. In this sense the traditional “boom and bust” cycles of capital relate to the unending “drama” of new organizations being formed and old ones being interred.

It really comes as no surprise that the organizational

form is beginning to emerge not as a value neutral mechanism, which may be easily shaped and imprinted upon by individuals wishing to utilize it. Rather, the opposite is certainly true; any organization, even in the hands and under the auspices of the most dedicated revolutionaries, must eventually devolve into a device of domination and mediation. This is logical, because domination and mediation exist as the sole potentialities of the organization.

The survival of capital is dependent upon the internalization of its assumptions by individuals. When these internalizations are recognized and refused, capital as dominant mode of production must die, because capital in its reified form will have died. To borrow a point from Poe, when the lunatics gain control of the asylum, the asylum will have finally achieved total control of the lunatics. Contrariwise, true revolutionaries (or lunatics) will in all likelihood set the whole rotting structure ablaze.

Capital and Crack

Edwin Hammer

The war on drugs is the representation of a war; it is a war of design and calculation. Drugs have replaced European and Asian communists as the most dangerous threat to

capital and crack

national security and domestic cohesion. Cold war postures have again been assumed; paranoia renewed. An unabashed appeal to patriotic and nationalistic instincts will engender the unity desired by those most distressed at the signs of decay. Communities ravaged by the drug trade, particularly crack, demand attention and action, concerted effort and visible results. The stage is set for war. The people have spoken.

The apprehensive suspect a ruse, a phantom, a representation: a war as the cover for other activities. They denounce the war on drugs as bullshit, a blatant attempt to accustom the population to an increased police presence and the introduction of an array of totalitarian techniques. They recognize the militarization of society and declare war on the war on drugs, but don't understand the drug trade or realize that the war on drugs must be waged, but cannot be won; not because victory is impossible, nor because elites and other servants of capital prefer an underclass made impotent by addiction. This war will never be won because capital is served by the drug trade, the crack enterprises in particular. The distribution and exchange of crack enables capital to reassert real domination over individuals so marginalized they elude the traditional or "official" avenues used to establish hegemony. Educational institutions and other structures have failed in their responsibility to domesticate these individuals and facilitate acquiescence to the dominant forms of organization. Capital exploits the crack trade

because establishment organizational forms cannot penetrate the ranks of those on the distant margins of social life and the economy.

The poverty, oppressive misery, unemployment, and despair exploited by the crack trade are artifacts of capital that tend to vitiate real domination and decrease ideological indoctrination and the integration of marginalized individuals into the correct organizational forms. These artifacts are burdens on capital, and limit expansion and the reproduction of social relations and roles: the poor necessarily fail as consumers and the unemployed fail as producers. Capital in process struggles to eliminate these counter-productive artifacts. The exigencies of the capitalist mode of production, however, prevent the maintenance of real domination through “official” forms (ie, “legitimate” employment, market activity), and the concomitant internalization of the dominant values and assumptions. Capital is compelled to utilize unofficial forms—such as the underground economy—to prepare the marginalized individual's acquiescence to the hierarchical social structures which mediate capital and society. The expansion of capital is the acceptance of its presuppositions: the efficiency of the division of labor, the necessity of hierarchy, the legitimacy of authority, etc. The crack trade serves capital; it reproduces the organizational forms and activities that define capital as a social mode of production.

Crack revolutionized the illegal drug business. Like Henry Ford, the first crack entrepreneurs mass produced

their commodity and made it available at low prices. They removed the inconvenience and risk of freebasing, for a time the most common method of cocaine use, enjoyed primarily by the wealthy and most dedicated users. Crack delivered the same “quality” high with much less muss, fuss, and money. It is a highly addictive commodity. Each sale perpetuates or increases demand; most consumers become repeat customers. Addiction provides a built-in mechanism for growth, the requisite for the success and survival of all capitalist enterprises. Crack is the ideal commodity of the most cynical and sophisticated marketers: a product that by its existence and subsequent consumption is the source of continued demand. Crack creates need.

The organizational structures and the activities of crack enterprises mirror those that predominate. Journalists and law enforcement officials marvel at the sophisticated management of LA gangs and Jamaican posses. Street corner shoot-outs suggest the vast profits to be made, and are reminiscent of the battles of the nineteenth-century monopolists. Clever brand names, free samples, and two-for-one specials entice buyers and ensure demand. Like all producers of commodities, the crack trade tends to valorize humanity as consisting solely of potential consumers, as anyone who has walked down a “hot” block can attest to. No one now dares dispute that crack is part of the establishment, belonging to that part known as organized crime.

The crack trade presents organizational structure to individuals generally outside the dominion of capital. It

offers opportunity to the ambitious and ruthless, and rewards the enterprising. It increases the circulatory system of capital; the successful constitute a class of especially conspicuous consumers. It perpetuates particular values which justify capital as a social mode of production and trains youth to use the existing structures advantageously. The fourteen year-old kid selling crack or steering buyers to dealers epitomizes more “rugged individualism” than any servant in the corporate bureaucracy. Experience on the streets is a more honest preparation for an active life in the culture of domination than any Junior Achievement project. The organizational forms and activities that are the crack trade provide support and structure, mandate acceptance and the subsequent reproduction of authoritarian social relations, and reward model behavior with hierarchical ascent. The crack trade allows the reassertion of real domination and for this reason is required at this time for the establishment of hegemony by capital.

This hegemony is also established many thousands of miles away, in South America, where campesinos abandon traditional uses of agriculture to supply the raw materials for the crack trade. Marginals there too are integrated into the correct forms of organization, and social relations are reproduced through daily activity. The assumptions and presuppositions of capital are internalized, and real domination, once again, is asserted.

To achieve victory in the war on drugs, and also main-

tain real domination, capital must declare war on poverty, i.e. create acceptable, official, legal activities, and mediating structures. It must eliminate the artifact and redefine itself. This is a task for the servants of capital, for capital—although possessing the appearance of autonomy—is not alive and has no will or determination; it is nothing without the living activity of humanity. But the servants don't seem up to waging the “right” war. Either way, capital is served: real domination is reasserted, capital as a social mode of production is reproduced and perpetuated, and hegemony is continually established. Among those affected, the possibility for recognition and refusal diminishes, and the potential for radical change dissipates.

Some cynics might snicker: if crack didn't exist, Capital would have to invent it. Fools! The joke's on them. Capital did.

Anarchism 102: Mr Thedford

Chapter Review “Dawn of What Age?” Essay Question

As we have seen, there are in the world four significant political forces: Anarchism, Communism, the Republicans-and-Democrats, and nazis. The nazis are dumb and like to hit people. They are dangerous when they have a leader and especially dangerous when they have a leader and the economy fucks up. The Republicans-

and-Democrats believe in rule by the smiling ambitious person with the most effective slogans, and they believe in the continuance of the existing social economic system. The Anarchists and Communists believe in the discontinuance of the existing social economic system. Both envision a revolutionary transformation of society. The Communist approach is to organize a strong party, seize state power, and force the transformation. The Anarchist way is to destroy state power so that the people can bring about their own revolutionary transformation.

The world experience has been that when Communists get control they eliminate all rivals for power and suppress all other points of view. After a few decades in the dark ages they start lightening up but then all they can think to do to fix the mess is to start restoring capitalism. It has been suggested that this discredits the Communist approach. So, is Anarchism the way?

Keep your answer brief and to the point. Be clear on the distinction between traditional Anarchism with its class war emphasis and the new Anarchism with its strong peace orientation.

THE DEATH OF SCIENCE



Seven Theses On Play

Paul Z. Simons

1.

Play is desire realized, it is the negation of domination. Play is unmediated activity that does not attempt to produce a specific emotion, indeed any emotion at all. The result of play may be alternatively orgasm, terror, delight, even death. Play is ambivalent; any one of these conclusions or any multitude of others are possible (there may even be no conclusive result). Yet, each eventuality in its own context is correct because none are specifically elicited except in the content of the play-activity that produces it.

2.

In pre-agricultural societies, play was the common denominator of all activity, in much the same way that the gift was the characteristic mode of exchange. For the primitive, play was the activity that not only defined tribal and familial relationships, it also provided food, clothing, and shelter. In the pre-agricultural era of abundance, the outcome of any given hunt was irrelevant. Necessity (and surplus) meant nothing in such societies, consequently food-generating activities were not driven by the alternative of starvation, rather they existed simply as

diversion, play. Further, play was essential to the stability of pre-agricultural societies because of play's tendency to exclude coercion, language, even time. The death of play was the triumph of civilization, of domination...

3.

Capital has sought to abolish play and replace it with leisure-time; a void that must be filled as opposed to fulfillment that negates the void. Leisure-time is capital's valorization of play, another mediation in the infinite maelstrom of mediations. In capital's dual role of pimp and prostitute, it not only creates leisure-time, it produces commodities and spectacles with which to fill it. Such valorization demands passive, stupefied participation (the negation of play) and seeks to elicit a single response, enjoyment. Which is, of course, the pay-off for time/money investment in a specific commodity/spectacle. As a result, play (like language) reverts to its magic form and becomes something dangerous, unmanageable, ultimately lethal; and capital—in order to discourage play—portrays it as such...

4

Capital, even in its current manifestation of real domination, has been unable to eradicate play. The “discovery” of play occurred repeatedly in this century, occasionally (though not exclusively) in the realm of the avant-garde. Alfred Jarry (in the Ubu plays and his system

of pataphysics—the science of imaginary solutions) definitively incinerated the continuum of retrograde representational form. In doing so, he reintroduced play not as an anesthetic, but as a wrecking ball. Dada continued the assault, but with the exception of the Berlin variant (and its most impressive non-member, Schwitters), the notion of play became ritualized, dead. The final recuperation of the avant-garde, achieved via the reaction of surrealism and the concomitant resurrection of the representational form, eliminated play as an element of rejection until the re-emergence of Utopian currents after World War II. A number of post-war cultural movements, most notably Lettrisme, the Situationist International, Mail Art, and Neoism all incorporated play into their experimentation. Each movement, however, failed to realize the revolutionary implications of play, and in doing so allowed it once again to become formalized, rigid, and as such became recuperated as mediated activity.

5.

Play has become an integral part of revolutionary activity. Even Lenin, the idiot father of the authoritarian left, could (correctly) describe the Paris Commune of 1871 as a “festival of the oppressed,” though he (like Marx) arrived at an erroneous conclusion concerning the failure of the uprising. There are a plethora of examples of the inclusion of play in the activity of the Communards, particularly of play in its destructive aspect. This is not surprising, given

the Commune's lack of resources, military contingencies, and the fact that the entire rebellion lasted some seventy two days. Still, the toppling of the column at the Place Vendôme (a universally hated symbol of the Napoleonic victories), as well as the attempt by a few of the more extreme Communards to put Notre Dame to the torch, can hardly be interpreted as anything but play. Such manifestations also crept into the the behaviour of individual Communards. Recall the story of the young rebel who confronted a suspect bourgeois on the street. The nervous capitalist protested that he had never had anything to do with politics, to which the Communard replied, "That's precisely why I'm going to kill you." Though the story ends here in historical accounts, it is not hard to imagine the young rebel flashing a fiendish grin at the shaken bourgeois and then walking off to take his place on the barricades....*bon chance, Citoyen!*

6.

Modern revolutionary eruptions have also exhibited certain elements of play. The May-July events of 1968 in France immediately bring to mind the joyful, indignant posters produced by the students of the insurgent Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Further, through the blood, tear gas, and concussion grenades of the nights of barricade fighting (May 6-May 11), there emerged numerous examples of play. Most observers concur on this point; Prialux and Ungar describe the defiant students as "one big frantic

family;" even the partisan Trotskyite account by Seale and McConville includes an anecdote about the left-bank cafe Le Luxembourg. During one night of rioting the cafe had been invaded and transformed into a makeshift battlefield. After the insurgents and police moved off, the manager was directed by a prefect to close his establishment, to which he replied, "...tonight Le Luxembourg will not close its doors; it has none left!" More recently, during the suppression of Solidarity in Poland, a handful of militants produced a mask with a billed officers cap and dark glasses that affected a likeness to General Jaruzelski. The twist was that the mask was designed to fit dogs. Evidently during the final days of Solidarity the police would spend their days breaking up demonstrations and nights chasing stray canines who were, for all intents and purposes, impersonating the General Secretary of the Communist Party...

7.

The very existence of "theses" that attempt to define and illuminate historical examples of play stand in some sad way as a testament to the alienation from the activity they seek to describe. The terminal malaise that has characterized revolutionary theory and culture for at least the past two decades must be interpreted as the triumph of formalized technique, the crushing baggage of intellectualism. Even the ultra-left communist and anarchist movements seem condemned to stumble the

same squalid path traversed by social democracy almost a century ago. The “revolutionary” belief that the “liberation” of women, ethnic minorities, gays and lesbians, or the Third World will take a significantly different form than the “liberation” of the working class via better wages, open employment policies, and “benefits” exists as an iron-clad example of the pervasive disintegrative consciousness of the left. Revolutionary consciousness, on the other hand, seems to currently reside in the refusal of all dominative forms, the permanent contestation of every assumption; in a word, play. If the new society gestates in the womb of the old, then its first duty is quite obviously matricide.

WORKERS OF THE WORLD, COME OUT TO PLAY!

Nietzsche and the Dervishes

Hakim Bey

Rendan, “The Clever Ones.” The sufis use a technical term *rend* (adj. *rendi*, pl. *rendan*) to designate one “clever enough to drink wine in secret without getting caught”: the dervish version of “Permissible Dissimulation” (*taqiyya*, whereby Shiites are permitted to lie about their true affiliation to avoid persecution as well as advance the purpose of their propaganda).

On the plane of the “Path,” the *rend* conceals his

spiritual state (*hal*) in order to contain it, work on it alchemically, enhance it. This “cleverness” explains much of the secrecy of the Orders, altho it remains true that many dervishes do literally break the rules of Islam (*shariah*), offend tradition (*sunnah*), and flout the customs of their society—all of which gives them reason for real secrecy.

Ignoring the case of the “criminal” who uses sufism as a mask—or rather not sufism per se but *dervish*-ism, almost a synonym in Persia for laid-back manners & by extension a social laxness, a style of genial and poor but elegant amorality—the above definition can still be considered in a literal as well as metaphorical sense. That is: some sufis do break the Law while still allowing that the Law exists & will continue to exist; & they do so from spiritual motives, as an exercise of will (*himmah*).

Nietzsche says somewhere that the free spirit will not agitate for the rules to be dropped or even reformed, since it is only by breaking the rules that he realizes his will to power. One must prove (to oneself if no one else) an ability to overcome the rules of the herd, to make one's own law & yet not fall prey to the rancor & resentment of inferior souls who define law & custom in ANY society. One needs, in effect, an individual equivalent of war in order to achieve the becoming of the free spirit—one needs an inert stupidity against which to measure one's own movement & intelligence.

Anarchists sometimes posit an ideal society without law. The few anarchist experiments which succeeded

briefly (the Makhnovists, Catalan) failed to survive the conditions of war that permitted their existence in the first place—so we have no way of knowing empirically if such an experiment could outlive the onset of peace.

Some anarchists, however, like our late friend the Italian Stirnerite “Brand,” took part in all sorts of uprisings and revolutions, even communist and socialist ones, because they found in the moment of insurrection itself the kind of freedom they sought. Thus while utopianism has so far always failed, the individualist or existentialist anarchists have succeeded inasmuch as they have attained (however briefly) the realization of their will to power in war.

Nietzsche’s animadversions against “anarchists” are always aimed at the egalitarian-communist narodnik martyr types, whose idealism he saw as yet one more survival of post-Xtian moralism—altho he sometimes praises them for at least having the courage to revolt against majoritarian authority. He never mentions Stirner, but I believe he would have classified the Individualist rebel with the higher types of “criminals,” who represented for him (as for Dostoyevsky) humans far superior to the herd, even if tragically flawed by their obsessiveness and perhaps hidden motivations of revenge.

The Nietzschean overman, if he existed, would have to share to some degree in this “criminality” even if he had overcome all obsessions and compulsions, if only because his law could never agree with the law of the masses, of state & society. His need for “war” (whether literal or

metaphorical) might even persuade him to take part in revolt, whether it assumed the form of insurrection or only of a proud bohemianism.

For him a “society without law” might have value only so long as it could measure its own freedom against the subjection of others, against their jealousy & hatred. The lawless & short-lived “pirate utopias” of Madagascar & the Caribbean, D’Annunzio’s Republic of Fiume, the Ukraine, or Barcelona—these would attract him because they promised the turmoil of becoming & even “failure” rather than the bucolic somnolence of a “perfected” (& hence dead) anarchist society.

In the absence of such opportunities, this free spirit would disdain wasting time on agitation for reform, on protest, on visionary dreaming, on all kinds of “revolutionary martyrdom”—in short, on most contemporary anarchist activity. To be rendi, to drink wine in secret & not get caught, to accept the rules in order to break them & thus attain the spiritual lift or energy-rush of danger & adventure, the private epiphany of overcoming all interior police while tricking all outward authority—this might be a goal worthy of such a spirit, & this might be his definition of crime.

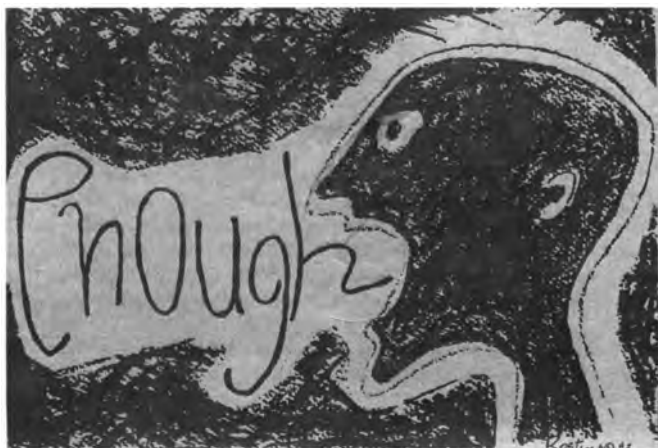
(Incidentally, I think this reading helps explain N’s insistence on the MASK, on the secretive nature of the proto-overman, which disturbs even intelligent but somewhat liberal commentators like Kaufman. Artists, for all that N loves them, are criticized for telling secrets.

Perhaps he failed to consider that—paraphrasing A. Ginsberg—this is our way of becoming “great”; and also that—paraphrasing Yeats—even the truest secret becomes yet another mask.)

As for the anarchist movement today: would we like just once to stand on ground where laws are abolished & the last priest is strung up with the guts of the last bureaucrat? Yeah sure. But we’re not holding our breath. There are certain causes (to quote the Neech again) that one fails to quite abandon, if only because of the sheer insipidity of all their enemies. Oscar Wilde might have said that one cannot be a gentleman without being something of an anarchist—a necessary paradox, like N’s “radical aristocratism.”

This is not just a matter of spiritual dandyism, but also of existential commitment to an underlying spontaneity, to a philosophical “tao.” For all its waste of energy, in its very formlessness, anarchism alone of all the ISMs approaches that one type of form that alone can interest us today, that strange attractor, the shape of chaos—which (one last quote) one must have within oneself, if one is to give birth to a dancing star.

Spring Equinox, 1989



Squatting as Self-Determination

Mary Shelley

Squatting is taking direct action to realize your right to housing. You don't wait for a landowner to rent you an available apartment at an affordable price, and you don't languish for years (where? on the streets?) until a government-owned apartment becomes available. Squatting is opening a publicly-owned building that has not been used to its potential, doing what reconstruction needs to be done, keeping it fully inhabited, and defending it from landowners, developers, and government agencies, which do not make a profit from this manner of living.

Buildings are often closed, and remain empty for years, because of the landowner's failure to pay real estate taxes. Buildings that became vacant for this reason, as often happened in the late 1970s, many times have little or no structural damage, or only damage that occurred since their closing (such as by rain leaking in through a broken skylight). These are the best buildings to open as squats because they are city-owned—you can often live in them for a long time before the city realizes you are there, and then they must try to evict you legally. The status of a

squatting as self-determination

vacant building, and the reason for its closing, can be looked up by anyone at the city's hall of records.

The work that most often needs to be done on a squat once it's opened is patching or re-tarring the roof, rebuilding stairs, replacing windows, re-pointing bricks, relaying joists (supporting beams for floors and ceilings), replacing water pipes stripped away by scavengers, and rewiring. This work really is not difficult when a houseful of squatters work in cooperation. More experienced squatters usually have the practical skills to complete these tasks, and those who are newer to squatting can learn alongside them.

A new squat usually fills up pretty quickly. It is important to have all the apartments occupied in order to keep morale high, get repairs done, and prevent the building from being vulnerable. It is just as important to have a good representation of the neighborhood you live in. For example, if your squat is in a predominantly Hispanic, family-based neighborhood like Loisaida, it will have less chance of being accepted and defended by the community if it is made up mainly of white teenage punks (no offense—some of my best friends are white teenage punks!). As the purpose of a squat is, to my mind, to provide housing to those who cannot (or will not, as a form of protest) pay rent, it is natural and preferable to house the homeless. The squat that I live in is also home to people who were previously living in Tompkins Square Park, on the streets, and in shelters and transient hotels,

and they are the greatest of assets to the building. Though some homeless people may take some time to adjust to living cooperatively in a squat after the frightening experience of being without a home, they are often more home-minded than the people who squat for political reasons rather than from necessity, and so make the squat stronger. Homes, not shelters, are the answer to homelessness, and squatting allows the homeless to help themselves and communities to care for each other.

Squats need to defend themselves from illegal eviction attempts by the government and its various (anti-) housing agencies, such as the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) in New York City or the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), a Federal agency that attempts to deal with squats in other cities, like Philadelphia. These threats are effectively handled by defense networks that communicate by telephone—other squatters, community supporters, and even friends from distant neighborhoods come out to intervene in the attempted eviction by their presence. Legal proceedings in housing court are handled by several effective lawyers who frequently work for the squatters for free. Trickier to deal with are the acts of harassment that landowners or developers will pay local thugs for and the unaccepting attitudes of small-minded neighbors. The small and random acts of violence against the squats, like the large and organized acts of the government, should

have to contend with the defense network. Attitudes, though, can only be changed through outreach and example. Squatters can be a benefit to their neighborhood by holding events like children's film screenings, using local resources such as credit unions, patronizing small neighborhood businesses, and keeping their buildings and gardens attractive, while sharing information on squatting through conversation and literature.

The recent demise of a local squat may serve as an example of how, when not approached constructively with long-term goals in mind, a squat can collapse in on itself. In-fighting reportedly prevented progress from being made on fixing the building, which was already damaged by fire. The residents seemed to look to one person to take leadership of the building. This person, as individuals will, made drastic mistakes in judging some young people who wanted entry into the building and, on his own, decided to give them apartments, presumably on the basis of their ethnicity rather than their actions. These people virtually terrorized the other residents of the building, who only waited for their leader (who was now away) to return to take care of the problem. When this leader came back and attempted to make the people who were causing the upset leave, they set fire to the building (at its previously-damaged, vulnerable point) early one morning. Luckily no one was injured, but the building became further damaged because of the apparent lack of concern of the firefighters. Though the building could

have been repaired, a fact attested to by architects, the court orders to preserve the building that the squatters obtained were twice overturned. The government was only too happy to get rid of a group of people it couldn't control, and who really owns the courts, anyway? In response to the near-riot that ensued, the demolition of the building began amid eleven hundred police in riot gear, sealing the street to everyone but residents of the block, who had to show identification and be escorted to their doors, until the travesty was completed.

This might have been avoided if the squatters had put the necessity of making repairs above their personality conflicts, because a physically unsecured building is a great liability, and if they had taken responsibility themselves for the direction in which they wanted to move. Instead of someone making decisions alone as to who comes into the squat, everyone who will be affected—which is everyone living in the building—should have a say. The squatters should have insisted on this. In this instance, by the time the matter reached court, it was too late to save the building. To live as squatters, free from authority's control, we must determine to take control of our lives ourselves, and not just appoint different masters. Autonomy is ennobling, though not without cost.

Lock Up Your Daughters

Sasha Forte

LOCK UP YOUR DAUGHTERS

LOCK UP YOUR DAUGHTERS 'CAUSE YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT
THEY'RE GONNA DO NEXT.

LOCK UP YOUR GO-GO DANCING DAUGHTERS YOUR SKINHEAD
DAUGHTERS

YOUR SEX-LOVING DRUG TAKING HELL RAISING DAUGHTERS!

LOCK UP YOUR DYED-HAIRED DAUGHTERS YOUR MINI-SKIRT
DAUGHTERS

YOUR LAUGHING TEETH BARED IN THE NIGHT DAUGHTERS!

LOCK UP YOUR LONG AGO DAUGHTERS IN CHASTITY BELTS
SO THEY WON'T FUCK BEHIND YOUR BACK

LOCK UP YOUR DAUGHTERS TODAY WHEN THEY THROW
MOLOTOV COCKTAILS IN YOUR EYES AT YOUR LIES AT YOUR
STUPID POWER GAMES

DENYING THE WISDOM THAT PRECEDES THE MILLENNIA OF THE
FATHER AND THE SON LOCK UP YOUR DAUGHTERS

YOUR SEXY SMOOTH CURVED LIKE THE MOON STRONG AS STEEL
DAUGHTERS

YOUR CRAVEN GYPSY DAUGHTERS YOUR CASTRATING VAMPIRE
DAUGHTERS

YOUR UNWRITTEN DAUGHTERS ALREADY DOOMING FAIRY
TALES TO DUST

LOCK UP YOUR IMAGINARY DAUGHTERS YOUR LOST DAUGHTERS
YOUR STOLEN DAUGHTERS AND YOUR DEAD DAUGHTERS

LOCK UP YOUR BOOKLOVING DAUGHTERS YOUR ROCK'N'ROLL
DAUGHTERS
AND THE ONES WHO DO NOTHING ALL DAY LONG
IF YOU LET YOUR DAUGHTERS LOOSE THEY WILL CHANGE YOUR
WORLD
IF YOU LET YOUR DAUGHTERS LOOSE THEY WILL NOT COME
BACK
IF YOU LET YOUR DAUGHTERS LOOSE THEY WILL DO WHAT
THEY WANT
AND THEY WON'T ASK YOU WHAT YOU THINK OR WHETHER
YOU LIKE IT
SO LOCK UP YOUR DAUGHTERS
YOUR ANIMAL DAUGHTERS YOUR MUSHROOM GODDESS
DAUGHTERS
YOUR TOO FAST TO LIVE TOO YOUNG TO DIE DAUGHTERS
YOUR REBEL DAUGHTERS YOUR FIST-CLENCHED DAUGHTERS
LOCK 'EM UP BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE
LOCK UP YOUR LAZING IN THE SUN DAUGHTERS
LOCK UP THE DAUGHTERS OF STRANGERS THE DAUGHTERS OF
TOMORROW
LOCK UP YOUR BOLD BAWDY DAUGHTERS YOUR LOUD BRASH
DAUGHTERS
YOUR MUSICAL MOUTHED EERIE EYED DAUGHTERS
YOUR PAINT SPLASHING IDOL SMASHING DAUGHTERS
YOUR FINGER SUCKING PALM READING HERETIC DAUGHTERS
YEAH!
LOCK 'EM UP LOCK 'EM ALL FUCKING UP
BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

lock up your daughters

Take Things From Work

The Strategy of Appearance.

The Audacity of Real Life as a Tactic

by ummfatik

Take stuff from work / It's the best way to feel better about your job / Never buy pens, pencils, paper / Take them from work... / It's the best way to feel better about your low pay & appalling working conditions.

—King Missile (Dog Fly Religion),
“Take Stuff From Work”

From the butchering of youth's energy to the gaping wounds of old age, life cracks in every direction under the blows of forced labor. Never before has a civilization reached such a degree of contempt for life; never before has a generation drowned in mortification, felt such a rage to live.

—Raoul Vaneigem,
The Revolution of Everyday Life

It is here, in a gray mizzly land, holed up far away from the fray, with a bottle of courage to my left, that I write you this account of my time done—& undone—at a Manhattan firm over a period of 5 years.

I needn't brag about my crime to prop it up as significant. In hindsight it has gained a resonance usually reserved for premeditated treason. My crime was much more than delinquency or crimes against property, yet it wasn't really a crime at all! More a counter-friction against the murderous inertia of work, the self-martyring delusion of workaholism that inevitably tempers the fear of living by maiming the spirit.

Prior to this job I'd been axed from three of four jobs & I'd never worked at any one place for more than one and a half years. I'd just been fired from my warehouse job where muscle and theories of work developed inversely proportional to my dwindling bank account. The owners were of the tribe who believed idleness = theft. Psychotics of accountability who desperately sought busy work for me. There's nothing that arouses my ire like busy work for suck pay.

Capitalism shows itself to be a system that organizes work in demeaning ways. It requires submission to a... system [that] 'reduces the activity of labor to dismembered gestures' &...this subordination is veiled by talk of industries 'giving' employment to their workers as if that were a favor. The tyranny of employment is thus ubiquitous, elusive, & sinister, a tyranny.

—Elizabeth Wolfcast,

“All Bosses Are Tyrants,” *NYTimes Book Review*
Behind the Veil of Economics, Robert Heilbroner

That I worked at any one place for five years is a miracle of sorts—

take things from work

a miracle not to brag about— & is best explained by recounting mysnatching the fruits that hung ripe from the vine.

This place is what I thought heaven was like—if god had been an interior decorator. Carpeting, blonde wood, convertible couch, air conditioning, lush but functional, spacious & outfitted with every electronic gadget; fridge, coffeemaker, word processor, copy machines, VCR, even an electric pencil sharpener. & the liberal bigwigs romanticized their own youthful days of poverty & thus tried to “empathize.” & thus the fringe, at times, forget the low wage.

...they present every scheme...to give the worker the FEELING that he is more than a cog in the industrial machine while making sure that effective control ...is kept out of the hands of the man on the factory floor.

—Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action*

Yeah, ok, the official fringe benefits were the baited hooks for fish like me. Humanize & decorate a low wage. But my wage was so low that it effectively kept all heat off my back. I seldom had to account for my time. I recommend the shadows. I wasn't interested in “advancement.” Misguided ambition usually only leads to accountability, which means headaches, work your ass off to justify your new salary (+ title + wage calculated weekly + own stationary + health club + other ego fodder - overtime + maybe a watch when you jump ship.) Which creates a false sense of importance that will allow them to steal overtime & home time. You'll take your job home like tracking dogshit in off the street onto your carpet.

A satisfied need is not a motivator of behavior. The man

whose lower level needs (food, shelter) are satisfied...shifts to the social and egoistic needs. Unless there are opportunities at work to satisfy these higher value needs, people will be deprived...[& begin to] make insistent demands for more money. It becomes more important than ever to buy material goods which can provide limited satisfaction of thwarted needs.

—Douglas MacGregor,
“Human Side of Behavior”

They originally hired me to fold, staple, stuff, & stamp off the books so it didn't affect unemployment. & my keen eye-psycho-motor skills led to an offer out of that drudgery into the over-hyped world of computers. A data processor isn't much more than a glorified typist, a drone, a fleshy bloodshot extension of a memory machine.

The industrial energy destroys our best pleasures because it sucks up our time—time has become the greatest luxury of the moment. Energy eats up time that's needed for its product, its use, its domination & control.

—P.M., *bolo'bolo*

So I was no longer a temp. I got permanent status, I was part of the team. I had W-2s, benefits, & title.

WHAT I RETRIEVED: TIME. Why? If you don't re-appropriate time you grow old, mechanical, bitter, dreamless. Without time, money becomes under-utilized/over-fetishized & buys synthetic somas that attempt to replace lost time. You become a

take things from work

weekend warrior living for scientifically designed moments of recovery/shopping with indulgent vengeance, partying hard to gain that special amnesia.

How? Take work time & make something else of it as part of a total makeover in your relationships to employment. Sacrifice & self-delusionary martyring drop out of your wardrobe. You develop skills, adaptable tactics, a change in expectations. You sharpen a certain audacity.

Appearances: What I became good at was carving out a function, or more accurately, a nebulous appearance of function. I merely took the major ploy of poli-techno-commodity mediums—APPEARANCES—& turned it back upon itself. They pretended that my work had purpose so I pretended to work. Just like arrows are bent in cartoons so they boomerang back to hit the archer in the butt.

Not that I didn't put in some time of actual labor. I did. I became expert at things mechanical & electro-mystifying. & here I created the appearance that I was necessary, indispensable, the oil on the squeak. I did this, for instance, with periodic showy rescues at the copy machine. I peppered my day with flurries of furious work. This created indelible images in the minds of bosses.

...doing something which appears to promulgate one idea while actually encouraging another... using an oblique strategy rather than a frontal assault.

—V. Vale, "Pranks" RE/Search #11

Toner change, 2-sided copying, just ask me. No one took the time

to learn the machines so my knowledge made me not unlike a Mayan priest who holds the secrets of the calendar close to the vest. My BEING there became as important as anything I actually did. It was more than savvy. It was SOS. The appearance of involvement & diligence breeds supervisor confidence, & bosses will be grateful that you appear to work thus not calling their hiring judgments into doubt. They prefer this deception to ulcerous intra-office confrontations. This type of prowess allowed me to transform the workplace—like metaphysical redecorating—into my own recreation room for fun, freedom, & exploitation.

Adventures of Time Retrieval: The hump of my work-a-jerk (my job description always remained vague, a long list of non-quantifiable functions) was input/update of computer data. & again no one had time to keep track of my progress. So I began organically, as if part of the same dancestep, to scoop out chunks of time for myself.

When test data about VDT fatigue & other symptoms began to appear I was able to trump it up allowing me official breaks every 30 minutes or so. This afforded me even more time because no one was aware of when I began & stopped these shifts that emboldened me to take even greater liberties. Freedom intoxicates. It tastes good. & so I hauled in things into my routine I used to do at home; typing, editing, layout, writing letters, clipping articles, so that my day became anything but routine.

Furtive snatches became huge public swatches of time. Audacity intensified the adventure. Chunks of work time got chiseled & re-sculpted into personal time, & over time I actually made the de-colonization of time look like part of my job description.

Time is NOT money. It's MORE than money. I managed to eventually finagle my work week into three 10-hour days while maintaining full time benefits, because much of my apparent function was commanding the computer with cryptic instructions to analyze & compile data & produce print-outs that often tied up the computer for long stretches.

This new work schedule "gave" me not only four day weekends but ten hours weekly, as well, when no one was in the office. So while I babysat the dinosaur computer spitting out pounds and mounds of tangible proof of my indispensability, all pretension to drudge work went out the window along with any masks of diligence I might've been wearing. So I'd de-colonized ten hours & now THEIR office became MY workpad.

Other time tactics: Use the typewriter. Whatever you are typing you will look busy & no one will look over your shoulder. Audacity plugs into employer fears of what they don't want to know. Learn the word processor. Develop your own files on your own floppy— address book, form letters, post-industrial grunge rap lyrics.

Stretch your lunch hour without inconveniencing other drones. Slip out without fanfare. Add fifteen minutes to each end. Take flexible, weird lunch hours.

I get around a rock that stands in my way until I have power enough to blast it; I get around the laws of the people, till I have gathered the strength to overthrow them...

—Max Stimer in
Anarchism: Old & New, Gerald Runkle

I did this ORGANICALLY, vaguely, non-greedily. I made it appear natural, as if my personal life was an extension of the workday when, in fact, it was much the opposite.

Lost time gets found: Like lint under furniture. Your showy flourishes of drudge work—a two-minute tap dance for the warden—can be partially reclaimed by being on the phone with a lovebird.

Read. Listen to the radio. Sew a button. Clip your nails. Your interest in things will be contagious. Encourage intra-office speculation, sports bets, headline poetry. Be a good listener. Likability will give you even more kudos to squander time. Killed time turned to leisure is good. Kick your shoes off. Informality turns the power tables. Ignore dress codes. Tell her to kick her high heels off. Massage her feet while she balances her checkbook & brags to her sister about what she gets away with. Watch her do her nails, fix a run. Remind them of the erotic. It knows no schedule. It kills the logic of routine. Make personal contact seem a vital aspect of office functioning. Hierarchy is power by division. Make it so natural that it would be inhumane & bad for morale—party pooper syndrome—if “petty” limitations were suddenly placed on fun, gossip, pranks, singing, listening to ballgames.

And he spake unto them do violence to no man...& be content with thy wages. —Bible

Mysticism's function is clearly articulated; to divert attention from daily misery...to prevent a revolt against the real causes of one's misery.

—Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*

take things from work

Even agnostics utilize guilt, the work ethic, the church's legacies of worker control, to shepherd the flock. So deconstruct the work ethic propaganda as the ticket, if not to paradise then to bigger X-mas bonuses. Turn the guilt back upon the bosses. Let the snake eat its own tail. Make them too ashamed to stop all that living.

I took time to use their phone books, *Bartlett's Famous Quotations*, reference books, computer software to hunt for contacts, type labels, prepare envelopes, doing every gritty aspect of personal projects there.

Don't hesitate to invite sexy/dynamic friends to make "surprise" visits. Then hang out on company time. Give them a tour, introduce them. Your friends will smash the dull routine of the day & they will be grateful. Make them envious, curious, & PART of your squandered time. Robust hugs and kisses will vicariously re-orient the office dynamic, stir the psycho-dust like a bouquet introduced into a room of stale air. No one will deny you this pleasantry. In fact, they may subliminally hint for more. Organic & nonbragadosio is best. Be random & periodic. Don't deaden this surprise by making it a habit.

What time did I come in? Who knows. If someone DID notice it's better for them to think there must have been a reason. Be audacious here. Again, don't inconvenience others but act—not as if it's owed to you, act as if the time is already yours.

By the time I filled in monthly time sheets the last of the month I had "worked" ALL my hours. No one had time to care if I came in late three tuesdays ago. & if you need to express your lateness express it in terms of adventure, sexual liaisons (remember what the Blues did for the word *work*), club crawling, dancing

with Madonna's maid. Make the lateness excusable by virtue of your lifestyle that lies beyond time clocks. Your adventures must amuse to get others on the vicarious ride. Your lifestyle can be your passport to even further time gouging.

The work machine doesn't care if it's managed by trans-national corporations or state bureaucracies, its goal is the same everywhere: steal our time to produce steel.

- P.M., bolo'bolo

The ass end of the day was now mine. I could eat, tack on time, leave hours early for a beer rendezvous.

Now, I don't want it to appear as though I did ALL of this consciously as part of some political agenda. I never got up on a soapbox, demanded, nor pontificated. Dogma is, after all, an emotional sort of fascism, a romantic attachment to old styles of revolt. Showy protests are for nostalgic martyrs who need a resume of scars & baited martyrdom.

The conscious withdrawal of efficiency.

—An effective Wobbly tactic

The acts were not full of agenda and mendacity. It was simply a bio-psychological imperative. My life was just too damn full to accommodate useless work. & once the soul tastes freedom the mind figures ways to feed it. I simply needed all I took to amplify life beyond the clichés of mere survival.

How much: After less than two years' time I'd managed to

take things from work

whittle my work week down to fifteen hours! My workday hovered around five to six hours of appropriated time. One and a half hours daily of personal typing, one hour of copying, two hours of personal time (late arrival, early departure, errands, buy toothbrush, etc.), one and a half hours of “squandered” time (reading, games, talk, history, phones, etc.), re-appropriated time re-tooled for satisfaction.

In my last eight months work became the mere ghost of an afterthought. My mode totally shifted into the overdrive of personal life—sans guilt or fear!

As employment nears the end of its usefulness you must decide whether to get fired for unemployment or go out with full benefits. You must use up accumulated sick or sick-of-work days because you can't take them with you. Sick days further cut my workweek (increased to 40 hours to save money in my last 6 months) down to 15! Work time = 37%. What could be better than getting paid to go to the zoo or have sex at noon!

Over time I'd convinced them too that since I didn't work Mondays that all Monday holidays should be tacked on to my vacation time!

Money: Although it's not time, it can amplify time, allow the victory of time to be a celebration.

When one takes time back one steals money. They go hand in pocket. For instance, I'd whittled my work week down from thirty to fifteen hours. This means working half the time for twice the bucks. & I wasn't through yet!

Ah, those monthly time sheets with their incredible fabrications. My fictions became fantasies of time travel. Adjusted

times became funny floating abstractions that merely appeared to represent worked time. & if overtime isn't taboo add an hour now & then. The job was a sweetheart job & I was a no-show, a mere holographic figment of industriousness.

*Who first invented work—& tied the free...to this dry
drudgery of the desk's dead wood?*

—Charles Lamb

Wealth Re-distribution Tactics: Become the office go-fer. Most functionaries find it demeaning. So it's yours. But don't volunteer your 1st day!

My official title was "data technician." I invented it. It sounded good. But I was so much less, thus so much MORE.

Go-fers get to buy office supplies. On every trip to the store you can toss in a datebook, marker, etc for yourself. Go-fers get to go outside where time becomes even more yours. Hand deliveries mean wandering the Village, stops at bookstores, visiting friends. Have a drink! Dream, wander, sit in the park. Any lateness can always be blamed on the subways. Fire on the Uptown 6. News at 11.

I went for cards, party supplies, boss' personal errands. At Woolworths add a cassette. No one has the time—it's NYC!—or the inclination to check receipts. They're just glad someone'll do the banking, braving not only sleet & oven heat but euphoric fall days. & I did it right. Kept the office chuckling with risqué cards, funky presents. It was part of the process of subversion that became my job description.

If you're artistic don't be afraid to get some mileage out of

take things from work

the secret envy/awe straight America has for creativity, partly because life & creativity are effectively segregated to amplify frustration & consumerism. So if you've survived school your creative life somehow begins to supersede work.

If you can establish yourself in a non-uppity way as an entertaining eccentric, as someone a little special, a mascot, it can win extra liberties. Your inability to keep exact hours will be excused by your proclivities, your higher calling. Your mystified creative process arouses their hidden longings, forgotten dreams. Everyone has a novel or film in them & you represent that possibility.

Offer your expertise with design problems, logos, layout, proofing, scrapbooks, computer graphics. Use your imagination. Free-lance at your job. It pays more. But at the same time it'll save them money. & free-lance hours, who knows how long it takes an artist to do certain tasks?

I was able to do a number of special projects at home where I racked up incredible hours. & no one doubted my hours. An artist's hours aren't quantifiable, especially over months of forgetfulness. I also worked a hotline that required writing accurately worded reports & sending them to various agencies. This I did free-lance, too—while at work! So five to ten hours a month I was making two times my wage.

Tools are extensions of a person & are used to extend that person's energy or creativity into the world of material transformation. Machines are extensions of an institutional energy or purpose. People use tools, but are used by machines."

—Ivan Illich, *Tools of Conviviality*

I had all this technology, all their machines at my fingertips. Pitney Bowes Machine: Truly one of this century's great inventions. Like a piggy bank. I sent all bills, business, tax junk, personal letters, presents, overseas air mail, crypto-grams, mail art, chain letters, friends' mail, cassettes, fliers, invites, pamphlets, books, journals, submissions to publications, etc. from work. I shiver when I calculate the magnitude of it. I venture \$15,000, but modesty—or fear—keeps it THIS low.

How: Just add in your stuff when you stamp theirs. Use their envelopes. Type addresses. At one point they suspected me or the cleaning lady. They hid the key. I fidgeted with the mechanism & figured how to jam a pin back with a scissor. I wasn't to be denied. Soon after I found where they hid the key. They gave up playing hide & seek—took too much time!

*Let come what will, I'll try it on / my condition can't be worse
/ & if there's money in that box / tis munny in my purse.*

—Black Bart, the “Po8” (Charles E. Bolton,
successful stagecoach robber with
a weakness for poetry).

Copy machines: Temple of the gods. Revolutionary as the printing press. & I knew my copiers like a teen knows his 64 Chevy; call me troubleshooter, copy expert, but don't call me late for paychecks.

I became a powerful lobbyist when it came time for new copiers. I got auto-feed, enlarge/reduce, etc. Pleading conceits of office efficiency. I got to spend a lot of time around copiers.

take things from work

In my desk files—mostly personal—I kept copying projects. So when I did their copying I'd throw in my own. & I got bolder. Did my copying whenever I felt like it. The audacity of my actions made it all appear legit. I could do almost anything I wanted now. Numbers: four copies of three novels + excerpts + stories + articles + newspaper clippings + whole books + collages + copyart + layout + little mags + stationary + X-mas cards, etc. In fact, after 5 with two machines on auto-feed I went through whole forests of paper. I'd venture one hundred thousand copies & discretion moderates me here.

Telephones: Don't burn up the lines. But don't deny yourself calls. Phones make the office even MORE your place. Phones help change the work place into an extension of your real life. Also, study the long distance bills. See how it's handled. Sometimes you fill in slips. Sometimes employees initial their calls. Find out where calls go. Learn how vigilant/petty/overworked the office manager is. & then go to it; Europe, California. Local calls are go from the word *work*. Make them during work, not at lunch. Call friends at their jobs. Multiply your subversion. Consumer complaint calls and letters can be done at work. Use your title, their stationary, their phones to get reimbursed for products with which you were "less than satisfied."

Don't put your feet up on the desk. Don't be stealthy either. You can drudge and drone while on the phone. Your outside life brought in by phone helps obfuscate the lines between work & play. Set an example. Be on the phone. Encourage her to call sis in Hartford. Encourage him to jump on that offer in Jersey. Encourage them to utilize killed time. Because by merely

vengefully killing time one begins to kill desire. Make them curious how you “get away with it.”

Radio is mostly multi-national Muzak, a weapon that soothes and stimulates production & consumption. Since we needed a radio & I was the go-fer I went out & bought a double dubbing cassette box. & commandeered it! News, ballgames, cassettes. Only guy in midtown with the Cramps, Beatnigs, & prime WFMU shows. I played dj, made & previewed cassettes, etc.

Take a case of White Out/You might need it one day/Take stuff from work/it's your duty as an oppressed worker/to steal from your exploiters.

—King Missile (Dog Fly Religion),
“Take Stuff from Work”

Supplies: Remember, stolen flowers smell best! No pre-apocalyptic home should be without reams of paper, pounds of paperclips, pens, markers, soap, bulbs, paper towels, software, notepads, champagne, answering machines, etc. The secret is to be attritional, go with the flow. Don't sneak. Just do it as part of the job. Things disappear, get used up. It's all tax deductible anyway. Time costs more money than supplies. Accountability is usually next to nil. Don't regret NOT taking something! It's in no one's interest to snitch. Mutual subversion will make it more fun, part of a wink wink pact.

The 1st problem is obviously a negative one: How can we paralyze and eliminate the Machine's control (ie, the Machine

take things from work

itself)?... We can call this aspect of our strategy 'deconstruction' or subversion...Let's not forget we're parts of the Machine, that it IS us.

—P.M., *bolo'bolo*

A good prank raises life up to what art should be: a critique of society, & a glimpse into a better, more poetic future.

—Andrea Juno, "Pranks," *RE/Search*, #11

It's the surprise, Zen bewilderment, that for a moment sends a flower through the concrete. Just as a sample: I once wrapped a co-worker's desk with a roll of Scotch tape. Stored food in desk drawers. Fun commenced with the decay. Often rearranged office desks, re-filled files. Moved paraphernalia to new spots. Sometimes it looked like a hurricane had hit. When the victim is mad & everyone else is laughing, he's forced into the mirth. Often added items at random from the kitchen or my image files to envelopes in mass mailings; penis enlargement ads, hair removal tools, a morsel of food, vacuums that suck away fat. Left a message for the president to call a certain urgent number. Turns out to be a prerecorded phone sex message. I'd often knock artworks askew. Copied my altered memos. Some looked real enough to confuse them. For the X-mas party tape I would add a few zingers to the standard stuff, like "Santa Must Be Polish" or "Suicide" sung to the tune of "Jingle Bells."

A monthly meeting by the Board meant the chairman would be snooping around looking for freebies & the key to the Pitney Bowes machine. I'd hide the key & leave periodic notes like, "You're getting warmer" or "I've hidden all my porno &

locked up my best pens.” What could he say?

I spread the word that I’d had sex at night in the boss’ prize Swedish swivel chair. I did, too! This rumor created an indelible image, a kind of irreverence that subliminally alters the way others will look at that chair, the boss in that chair, & the office. Helping burst a certain officiousness that wields power here.

Pranks & sabotage make you feel less humiliated... You’ve crossed certain boundaries: work & play are very separate activities. With the Puritan ethic work is something to suffer for—it’s a sacrifice & we’re supposed to feel it’s a privilege to survive. A prank brings play time into work...

—Frank Discussion, “Pranks,” RE/Search #11

So there I was on the phone with two copiers going, dubbing cassettes, using the word processor, with dinner heating up on the hot plate. & time went by full & warm & I wasn’t into just killing it.

Sweeping up: Devotion to the adventure of life will create a whirlwind & unravel those around you from their stuckness. The adventure will reverberate, resuscitate, leading to further emboldened acts. Your devil-may-care enthusiasm will be mimicked. Joyous vengeance, when hooked into the tactics of desire, will make them over, give them that certain glint in the eye. Pangs of liberation will enter their gut, their dance, & work, hopefully it kept the deprocessing going AFTER my departure.

The sole principle of control is fear. Rent, car payments, Visa bills. Stuck fates. It’s a deep fear of being caught both REDhanded & EMPTYhanded.

take things from work

*I've labored long & hard for bread / for honor & for riches /
but on my corns too long you've trod / you fine-haired sons
of bitches.*

—Black Bart, the “Po8”

Your instilled disillusionment will first be a killing field, an empty lot of squandered time. This wasted time must become the fallow field, the compensatory/positive beginning of desire, i.e. doing your nails at work means that time is now freed after work for reading, learning bird calls.

Caution: Keep voracious ego on choke chain. The law is always on their side. Don't get drunk on success. They finance the law, buy the judges to protect THEIR interests.

None of this is foolproof & all dependent upon work dynamics, personalities. Stay flexible, avoid didactics, be charming. If this fails you'll get fired & collect unemployment.

This strategy is all moot & void if you work for Greenpeace, an alternative press, or soup kitchen. You are miles ahead of my experience & the 95% of who daily work in employment = exploitation equations.

& what did they get from ME? Some time, a pile of reports, some slosh-shoed errands, repaired copiers. But by the time I made my big scam I'd so mastered the art of appearances that not only was I not replaced but my position (lovingly sculpted out of mimicry & hot thin air) no longer exists! No one has my title. It was retired like Casey Stengel's number. Any slack was absorbed by those left behind. When I left I pulled the sheet off

the ghost. There was nothing under the sheet except some funny collages, a grafittied phone, a VDT decked out with clippings and fortune cookie fortunes. Oh, I existed, collected a paycheck, but I barely worked. I was there, but not for them because, you see, I wanted my pay & the time to make it do as I say, as well.

What carrot is worth working for?... The game is up; there is nothing to lose anymore, not even an illusion. The organization of work & the organization of leisure are the blades of the castrating shears whose job is to improve the race of fawning dogs.

—Raoul Vaneigem,
The Revolution of Everyday Life

It's going to be an outstanding day/goof off on the company time/I wrote this at work/they're paying me to write about stuff I steal from them/life is good!

—King Missile (Dog Fly Religion),
“Take Stuff From Work”

The Rule of the Roles

Edwin Hammer

Everyday life is an orchestrated affair. Stage-managed and performed, an improvisation based on an array of presuppositions and patterns, it is becoming simulation.

take things from work

The organization of life, of social activity, is not immune to the modern ascent of representation, nor its ability to insinuate itself everywhere, becoming not only part of the fabric of society but the fabric of reality as well.

Representations are reproduced, inauthenticity perpetuated, as society reproduces itself daily. This includes the reproduction of the social relations that have come to define the individual in our society, and the reproduction of the socializing processes that form a psychic structure corresponding to the existing social order, an internalized representation of society, its divisions, its operations, its values, norms, and presuppositions. Molding the psychic structure of individual consciousness enables society to reproduce the forms of organization that predominate, and perpetuate a social life oriented towards economic growth, the development of society's productive forces, the reproduction of capital. Society is oriented towards this goal, and its achievement is given the appearance of a natural occurrence.

In a society organized for the reproduction of capital, individuals are valorized as commodities. Their exchange value is determined by their capacity for animating the roles they have assumed throughout their lives, the entire trajectory of the roles which make up their histories.

This trajectory is an education, a process of socialization: the accommodation of the self to roles in general and the tailoring required for any specific role. The individual learns how to handle his roles as well as

develop the experience to interact with other roles within the enterprises and associations in which he participates.

The role is an inauthentic self; it's what makes the individual functional in capitalist society and its concentrated, state bureaucratic permutations. The role permits the manipulation of the individual as an object, suitable for authoritarian management, and more importantly (due to the cultivation of a psychology of dependence), incapable of self-management, a form of social life that would require the collective transcendence of the rule of the roles.

The role integrates the individual into the culture of domination and allows capital to colonize the individual through the entire artillery of ideology and the forms of organization that put the individual, through his role, in the service of the economy, of reproducing capital, creating wealth. The role provides a context for the individual within the hierarchical enterprises through which social life is articulated and governed. The role is a home for those who have never gotten lost, a haven for those unnerved even by that prospect, and a prison-house for those engaged in the project of role refusal.

The role is the self-objectified. It is a thing which can be acted upon, stimulated, and modified, and makes the individual vulnerable to the force, persuasion, and seduction of social exigencies and the "spectacular media assault" designed and erected by skilled technicians, by the masters of conditioning, by all the artisans of

commerce and production constructing the discourse of capital. Skepticism and refusal are the only antidotes to this pressure and exhortation, but that stance can be exhausting. Most are worn out and surrender. Those who pride themselves on maintaining their defiance are doomed to eventually discover themselves also typecast, as rebels, outcasts, bohemians, or sociopaths. These roles may be marginal, and only loosely linked to the dominant culture, but they are roles nevertheless and represent modeled behavior.

The reproduction of capital requires the reproduction of the society which makes that orientation possible. This requires the reproduction of roles, for it is roles that are the basic units of our society; individuals are recognized by the roles they animate. Individuals must be stereotyped into modeled forms of behavior facilitating their placement in society in the service of social goals.

This modeling is the continuous denial and repression of individual subjectivity. The role is the objectification of this denial. In it one can locate all the habits, practices, predispositions, and programmed behavior patterns, everything which allows the individual to survive in a society governed by competing and complementary hierarchies of roles. Some roles embody the values of the dominant culture; they are role models, the very model of modeled behavior, and are emulated by others who see in them "positive" images, behavior to be reproduced. Even the unconventional is emulated and becomes conformism.

To be different without being distinctive is one way of being the same. Through their roles individuals are able to live stereotypes.

The role mediates authenticity, preventing the experience of directly lived life. One does not experience any particular generalized activity, one experiences the responsibilities and duties demanded by one's role in that activity. If at times it appears social life permits individuals to transcend their roles, this is merely the assumption, the animation of another preexisting role, or perhaps even the creation of a new role, but it is not transcendence at all. It is a new context, a re-placement into the hierarchically structured enterprises that predominate: a new role, with new, specialized duties, and the power to execute those tasks or ensure their accomplishment.

The powers lodged in a role do not belong to the individual; the individual mediates the power residing in the role. Roles require the lives of their players; they absorb the energy of the individual. The individual abdicates his self-power to the hierarchies in which he participates. Participation is contingent upon this renunciation. It is the roles which animate society, and orchestrated, stage-managed activity is experienced as authentic.

An awareness of separation from authenticity must be prevented from emerging. Individuals are compelled to identify with their roles. It's what allows the individual to be more than a nothing or a nobody, a nincompoop or nogoodnik. The power of roles is attractive, like the moon

to a moth, and is seen as the only possible form of human power. One is denied power as an individual, but can partake in or mediate the power exercised and allocated by the hierarchies of roles. One can advance through the hierarchies, skillfully meeting the demands of the roles encountered, becoming those roles, believing in those roles and all others. In this manner the power of roles is internalized.

The legitimacy of a “superior” role is acknowledged when that authority is internalized by others as they abdicate power over that part of their life to the dominion of the “superior” role. By internalizing the authority of another’s role, the individual also internalizes his or her own powerlessness; then he or she enunciates it, advertises it, but it is a silent pronouncement. It is obedience and acquiescence, accommodation and submissiveness; it is the glue that holds together hierarchical enterprises and activity, and ensures the survival, the reproduction of the dominant social relations, social relations mediated by roles. Internalizing the power of roles facilitates and reinforces the idea of the necessary domination of some men or women over others and makes the existence of this domination appear natural.

This psychological process of internalization legitimates the division of society into hierarchies of roles. Having thoroughly identified their role with themselves, those in subordinate roles tend to instinctively defend their position, their role. They believe they are defending themselves, for

in the culture of domination the role is necessary for the survival of the individual. It serves as both a threat and a protective shield. It is the projected self-image of the individual, obscured, refracted, mutilated in the mediating process; it is the personal organization of appearances. The role is animated by the individual, who brings it to life, makes it breathe and move, and then mistakes it for a self. The individual rationalizes the role, justifies it, makes it amenable, important, necessary, and rejects the idea of role refusal, seeing in it only the negation of self and not the negation of roles, not emancipation from the forms of social organization that have required the sacrifice of self-powers, that have denied people the right to create the situations in which they might be engaged, and that have instead constrained the range of desires to a limited but ambiguous set of predetermined choices and opportunities.

The circumscription of individuals and their lives into limiting roles tends to prevent a view of the structure of society as a whole and the individual's role within it. This lack of a structural view of the organization of society, the organization of roles, instills in many individuals insecurity, anxiety, and frustration, predicating impotence in the face of forces originating from the centers of power to which the individual has at best only a one-way connection, through the enterprises and associations in which he participates.

The centralization of decision making processes, apparent especially in the wave of mergers and acquisitions

recently preoccupying the financial world, tends to subordinate community and personal interests to the exigencies of hierarchical enterprises and the larger context in which they function, the economy. The individual in the mass is distanced from the origin of the forces that affect him. This has, no doubt, contributed greatly to the creation of a population including many who have lost their will for rational discussion and social action. They have had no practice, there are no arenas or forums where their influence can be asserted and registered tangibly. The instruments and mechanisms for participation have been awarded to the specialists, to "superior" roles, and individuals have become both spectators and bit actors in an improvised drama, reproducing the predetermined. Most roles have no projects of their own, but merely fulfill the routines that already exist. Immersed in role routine and regimentation, most individuals are unable to transform or transcend their lives through reflection and discussion and action. They are dependent upon the hierarchies, in the service of the economy, regulated to maintain stable growth in the development of society's productive forces. Every role is involved in this project: producers, consumers, and the massive support staff which perpetuates both and therefore also itself. This project is dependent upon roles, and roles are dependent upon it. Accompanying the role is a loss of independence, leading to eventually the loss of the desire for independence. This is the achievement of

capital: the reproduction of the organizational forms and social relations that make this mutual dependency possible and the establishment of the global hegemony, albeit in various guises, of these forms as the model of social organization.

Role routine limits the realization of desire, suppresses it, cleanses the individual for the insinuation of desires compatible with social organization ordering. Desires personal and private that are inconsistent with the role's function must be diverted or suppressed, and avenues for their realization reduced and eliminated, so that those desires, dangerous and unmanageable, can be forgotten without being missed. Desire is the source of the individual's will to act, to engage the self-power which has been relinquished. Without that engagement there remains a void unfulfilled and room for a certain dissonance, a tension between the role and the individual. A substitute must be found; individuals are reduced to searching for what could be the richest and truest part of themselves in the actions and functions of other roles, in the modeled behavior of other individuals. This search is a vicarious existence, lived through television, movies, and print media, through rumor and gossip and news. It is shallow, insubstantial, and inauthentic, yet succeeds in deflecting desire that would have to be sought outside the realm of the dominant forms of organization and social life.

The power embodied by roles and the hierarchies of roles originates in the living activity of humanity. Society

is organized and reproduced by men and women everywhere, at all times. The hierarchies, the enterprises and associations, are not natural forces, but are man-made structures, contingent upon the renunciation of self-power, the denial of subjectivity, and the internalization of the authority of other roles, that proclamation of powerlessness.

These hierarchies can continue only as long as people continue to assume their roles by force of habit as well as perceived necessity. Allegiance to the rule of the roles in general, if not to any particular enterprise, is almost always given in exchange for a role. Some roles, however, are poorly constructed and are subverted as authenticity creeps through the cracks and fissures, exposing the role for what it is: an inauthentic self, an artificial construct, a representation reproduced.

Capitalist society is limited in its ability to organize all its members, including the poor and disenfranchised who are usually organized through social welfare agencies or the illegal, underground economy. If society bulges with potential "players" without roles—individuals swearing no allegiance to any hierarchy or enterprise—and the existing forms of organization can no longer sustain society, the rule of the roles itself will be doubted and seen as impeding the development of community. The ability of the hierarchies to deliver will fall into disrepute. The role-less and the role-weary will meet; at this juncture their interests coincide. Those willing to refuse their roles

respond to the demand by the role-less that individuals begin to relate to one another without the mediation of roles, or the stultifying and corrupt hierarchies. Things invariably begin to fall apart, and this dysfunction is abetted by active intervention: direct action and agitation against the hierarchies, the forms of organization that predominate.

This will be a traumatic time for many. It is not an easy process, disillusionment rarely is, and those who refuse to abandon their roles before the hierarchies of roles perish will be condemned to perish with them. This process will, however, allow the emergence of new forms through which to articulate social activity, life itself.

Role refusal is the rejection of the stage-manager, the totality of mechanisms and structures presently organizing society. Through emerging new forms, the power once invested in roles is appropriated, and although the logic of the hierarchies may remain internalized, the roles themselves will be seen as no more than hollow, transparent shells, hiding something that no longer exists. It will no longer appear that it is the roles that animate social activity, and the power of roles will no longer remain internalized. The legitimacy of the hierarchies and the previous powerlessness are extirpated as new forms of social organization are discovered, invented, and reproduced. The real-life game of role playing comes to an end. Representation can be superseded by authenticity, and the creation of a new social unity involving the totality of whole

men and women engaging their self-powers in social activity, building community, can finally commence.

How to Think Like a Jacobin

Paul Z. Simons

Have no doubt of it, everything must change and end, for everything around us is unjust: victory and freedom will cover the world. Scorn nothing, but imitate nothing of what has gone before us.

Saint-Just

According to most theorists the Jacobins and their ideology are the last word in revolutionary contradictions. The social historian Crane Brinton expresses well the type of delirium that invariably follows any current study of the Jacobins when he concludes, "the Jacobins present for a brief time the extraordinary spectacle of men acting without apparent regard for their material interests." Such a statement, however, belies the essential truth of the Jacobins. For though the Jacobins were concerned with the economic betterment of the poor, they were not class warriors. The revolutionary programme of the Jacobins was something much deeper and more elemental than later conceptions of revolution (e.g., Marxist or anarchist).

In a very real sense the Jacobins were men at war not with economic disparity nor government, the Jacobins were at war with society itself. They sought to realize a New World in terms of the utter destruction of the Old, and it was this attempted realization of Utopia that fueled both repression and liberation during the Year II. In addition, examination of any historical struggle that sought to destroy a despotic, corrupt regime in favor of Utopia can only inform contemporary revolutionary theory.

Before examining the tenets of Jacobinist ideology it is essential to bear in mind a few facts that were peculiar to the Jacobins and to the epoch in which they existed. Foremost of these is the necessity of perceiving Jacobinism as a revolutionary tendency, for though the Jacobins certainly existed in the context of static (that is, non-revolutionary) societies, it was solely in the realm of revolution that they proved to be an active and effective force.

One must also recall the social, political, and economic milieu that the Jacobins existed and developed within. During the late eighteenth century, Europe was a continent engulfed by dying reactionary structures. In terms of political systems, absolutism and feudalism were the rule, and vocal opposition, if it existed at all, was to be found scattered among the educated. Further, capital (in this context, industrial capital) had failed to gain any serious footholds on continental Europe. Excepting the Rhine valley, Marseille, and Lyon, the predominant mode of production was still cottage manufacture or, in cities, small-

to medium-size artisanal production. Some thinkers (esp. Marx) attributed the slow process of industrialization to the intransigence of feudalism and its tenacious hold on the reins of power. It is, however, important to recall that more effective forms of refusal were brought to bear by both artisans and peasants (e.g., machine wrecking and sabotage) against the encroaching factory system than any informal proscription imposed in feudalist self-interest.

Given these facts it is perhaps possible for us to understand the nature of the society in which the Jacobins flourished. A society of non-industrial wage-earners, where an artisan and the journeymen he employed felt a common anger with the unscrupulous speculator who for the sake of profit drove up rent and food prices. A society at once deeply pious yet boisterously irreligious. A society of discontented intellectuals, landless farmers, and hopeless, homeless beggars. A society founded on absurd, meaningless, and finally despotic principles—in short, a society very much like the one of today.

The ideas that animated the Jacobins were drawn and synthesized from many sources; the influence of both Rousseau and Montesquieu are cited often by historians, yet it is not so much the ideas that the Jacobins took as it is what they did with them. One of the core ideas of the Jacobins was the essential equivalence of revolution and regeneration (moral, political, social, and individual). To the Jacobin, revolution had less to do with the seizure of state power than it did with the

eradication of fundamental societal assumptions in favor of other, more rational, “virtuous” assumptions.

The Jacobins were among the first to recognize the conscious mind as being one of the primary battlegrounds of the revolution. The adoption of the republican calendar and the metric system may be viewed as outgrowths of this realization. If the ideas of what constitutes the individual or society may be either reactionary or revolutionary, then why not the passage of time, or the measurement of physical objects? The Jacobins demanded of their revolution a new totality, a new world to be placed in direct contradiction to and in confrontation with the old. Revolution is regeneration and regeneration is nothing less than a total war against a corrupt society. The statement of Marat concerning the vices of aristocracy is telling, “The evil is in the thing itself and the cure is violent. One must apply the axe to the root.”

Virtue is a term that has lost much of its meaning. Currently, its use is confined solely to religious fanatics and generally in the context of sexual abstinence. In the late eighteenth century, however, virtue was an irresistible force. The Jacobins were both serious and sincere when they mentioned virtue, and when they did so it was usually in pursuit of and as justification for extreme revolutionary measures. Virtue served, however, not only as a goal, like Liberty, Fraternity, or Equality, but also as a means, a method whereby further goals could be delineated. In a day-to-day working definition, the Jacobin may have

enunciated the idea that virtue was living one's life in harmony with moral principles. Alternatively, he might have given an example of the virtuous man: a poor artisan who after a day of work went to his section or political club to debate the pressing issues of the day, an individual ready with pike, musket, or sword to defend the freedoms that he had won.

The above definition and example were not simply interdependent to the Jacobin, they were the same thing. The political and personal lives of the revolutionaries were one, an indivisible quantity. It was not enough to denounce privilege from the podium, one had to live consistently with what one said. This was the first modern variation of the now popular expression "the personal is the political." To the Jacobin, such a statement would have been yet another suitable definition of virtue.

This New World that the Jacobins envisioned is hard for us to conjure. If anything it takes as much from medieval communalism as it does from Rome and Sparta. It is ferociously nationalist, yet proclaims the highest form of patriotism to be the love of humanity. A federal government is provided for but it is weak and its constitution is constantly revised as the people see fit. Representatives are subject to constant review and censure, the people maintain always the right to insurrection in order to redress the wrongs of the government. The Jacobin Utopia guaranteed property for everyone, its ownership being a natural right that no one may infringe.

A world of both small, rural communities and large cities organized locally. A world of face-to-face direct democracy and popular militias.

In order to realize this Republic of Virtue, the Jacobins hoped to utilize justice as the revolutionary midwife. In January of 1793, justice meant regicide and less than ten months later, justice was the Terror. Most historians deal with the Terror on the level of a historical fact, a loosely contrived series of events that resulted in the deaths of around 17,000 individuals. Yet, as with most of history, facts have little to do with the truth. For the Jacobins the Terror was more than an internal purge of undesirables, more than a mass state-instigated bloodletting, it was an ideal, as essential to their revolution as virtue. Robespierre, in an address to the National Convention stated plainly what was on the mind of the Jacobins, "...the basis of popular government in time of revolution is both virtue and terror: terror without virtue being murderous, virtue without terror being powerless." He continued, "the Terror is nothing but prompt, severe, inflexible justice and is consequently an emanation of virtue."

The final ingredient in understanding the mindset of the Jacobins, as well as the last integrative tenet in their "social war mentality," was a lethal dose of paranoia, verging on mass hysteria. Though some of their fears, such as assassination, were real enough, it was their irrational horror of "plots," usually foreign and aristocratic in origin, that set the raging blaze to the Terror. Though

paranoia is more a diagnosis than a tenet, it did play an essential role in what the Jacobins became. When they found themselves at war with the past, they conjectured that the roots of the past were much more tenacious than the revolutionary ideology that they were evolving. Thus they ceased to be a body that tried to exemplify the revolution and began instead to be the revolution's taskmasters. Essentially, they began to doubt themselves. This led them on the fateful route too often traveled by revolutions, the endless cycle of repression in the name of saving the revolution. The example of Stalin comes to mind in this context and the final spasm of Jacobinist violence, dubbed the Grand Terror, is a suitable name as well for most "revolutions" in this century.

I am questioned occasionally about my fascination with the French Revolution. A usual response is that within this first great upheaval can be found the seeds of every revolution and revolutionary movement that has existed since. But that is insufficient as well, for within the French Revolution lies one of the profound lessons of history (and about history). Individuals (esp. "revolutionaries") have a tendency to judge social conflict with the same yardstick applied to gas mileage. There is a certain desire to perceive revolutions on a cost-benefit type basis, that is, what was accomplished versus how many people died. This "technological"* outlook begs the question of revolutions and possibly history itself. By their very nature social upheavals tend to their own conclusive

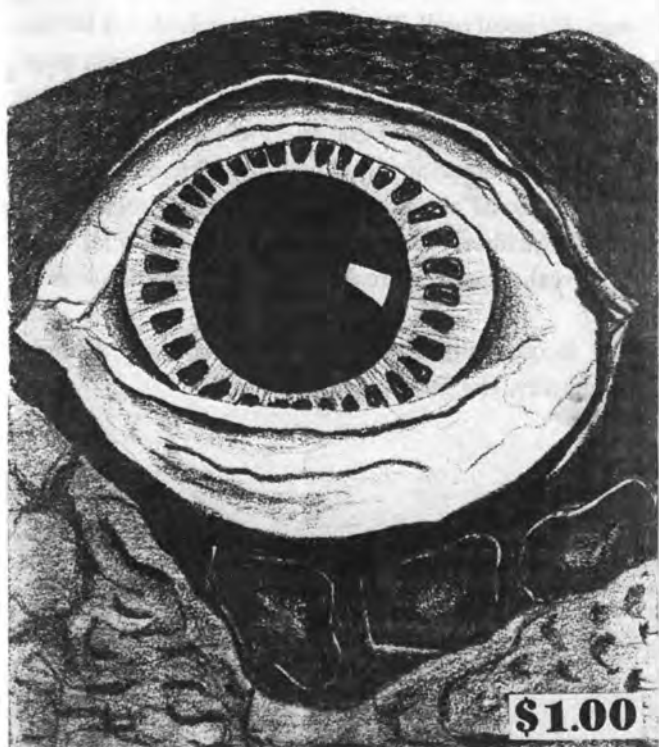
result; logic, reason, and order be damned. Still, there is a great need among some to condemn, to see the world in terms of black and white, good and bad. It is this tendency that will certainly produce new “Terrors” and not the other way round.

It is essential for revolutionaries to acknowledge their past, to accept it, and in so doing to inform the project of revolution in their own time. The French Revolution is ours, for good or ill. The heritage is twofold: it is the ascent up the steps of the guillotine and it is the all-night meeting debating the nature and necessity of liberty. And therein lies the final question that the French Revolution raises, the eternal question for revolutionaries, as it were. Are extreme goals always served by extreme methods? Are blood and liberty inseparable quantities? How far will *you* go to realize your desires? Sleep well, revolutionaries...

*(cf. Jacques Ellul's classic and exhaustive debunk of modernity, *The Technological Society*)

BLACK EYE

#8



Some Aspects of the Vietnam War

Major Bellows

Freedom is a Vietnamese word.

Andre Breton, 1953

The Vietnam War is a great nightmare that continues to weigh on the brain of American society. Since the 1970s a surfeit of books, films, television programs, and popular songs about the war has appeared, with more arriving all the time, making remembrance of the war an obsessive industry unto itself. Most of the products of this glut of (mostly Hollywood) representation focus on the experiences of American soldiers during the war or of returned veterans after it. Some of these films, like *Rambo*, feed populist reactionary fantasies of revenge for America's lost power and prestige, while other, more recent films such as *Platoon* and *Hamburger Hill* present a grim "existential" account of ordinary grunts fighting and dying for no apparent reason. The causes of war are never explained or condemned (or defended, for that matter). The travails of the soldiers are presented instead as tests of manhood, personal survival, and anguish, etc. The

some aspects of the vietnam war

Vietnamese themselves are curiously scarce or absent in many films about the war. There is little to be learned from these films, which are intended, after all, as entertainment blockbusters to rake in the box office receipts. The generation coming of age today does not know much at all about Vietnam, except it's one place in this sinking world where the shit went down. This generation is at least fortunate enough to have missed out on serving as cannon fodder for that war, having instead merely seen it on television, juxtaposed with situation comedies, Saturday morning cartoons, and cornflake commercials.

There is another well-stocked genre of films about Vietnam—documentaries. Not only was the Vietnam War the longest revolutionary struggle of the 20th century, it was also the most heavily documented conflict in human history. While the war was raging, propaganda films produced by both sides flooded the world. The US army attempted to convince audiences of the existence of a Manichean conflict between a “free world” and the evil hordes of communists bent on world conquest, who would be landing on the shores of California if they were not stopped in Southeast Asia. Documentaries made by Soviet bloc filmmakers were more sophisticated and perhaps more effective in swaying world opinion about the war. These films most often recorded the destruction and civilian suffering in North Vietnam wrought by American bombs. The propaganda function of such films was to influence the peace movement in the United States.

But for producing moral outrage against American intervention in Vietnam nothing beat the evening news of the commercial networks.

In the early 1980s a documentary history of the Vietnam War put together by journalist Stanley Karnow was broadcast on public television. This program represented the first attempt to give a systematic account of the conflict to an American audience, dating back to early Vietnamese nationalist struggles against French colonialism, then tracing the development of the Communist movement and all the events leading up to US intervention. Karnow's account is very thorough in its presentation of the empirical facts. This alone is a virtue in a country sorely lacking an understanding of history. But *Vietnam: a Television History* is misleading in its own way. Like all good journalism it is so balanced, "objective," and liberal it simply presents history's horrorshow as a piece of tragedy to which the journalist bears witness. The rulers are criticized, but always with a view that there can be better rulers who will not create such holocausts. The spectacle of journalism, whether print media or documentary, is a false coherent whole, an image of the state of things to which there can be no reply. It reports, without theoretical insight, the woeful tale of humanity's wandering through the winter and night. Unlike dramatic films about the war, documentaries offer no (anti-) heroes or role-modelled characters played by John Wayne or Sylvester Stallone. Instead they give us images of the historical actors themselves. But real

communication is absent all the same in the passive contemplation of news and nonfiction films. Spectators form half-baked, manipulated opinions about events over which they have no control in any case. The daily news, with its litany of wars, murders, and scandals, becomes the stuff of jaded conversations in everyday life. Historical documentaries often serve a similar function for more educated audiences. No extant film will give a sense of what the war actually meant.

The Vietnam War did more than anything else during the 1960s to tear American society to pieces, destroy its cherished myths, and replace the good spectator with the cynical spectator, who came to expect that everything is a sham, that nothing works, and that the world is completely out of control and beyond understanding. In post-Vietnam America, even the appearance of national consensus has evaporated, and nihilism reigns, even if most people still believe in God. Adorno said that after Auschwitz, poetry was no longer possible. This truth about the modern age, known so bitterly to Europeans, was a long time reaching the US, which, in spite of its own bloody history, has nonetheless escaped the brunt of history's carnage. The war in Indochina did not remotely approach the level of destruction of World War II, but it was bad enough for the Vietnamese, who suffered about four million dead, by Karnow's account.

The war did not even have a good imperialist

justification. Investments by US corporations in Vietnam were negligible. It was actually more about projecting an image of American power. The “domino theory” of the State Department officials held that if one country in Southeast Asia were to fall to the Communists, eventually all of them would. Therefore it was necessary to “draw the line” to deter further Communist inroads. This game of deterrence became a means of bluffing and projecting an image of power. The power itself was of course very real, but if it was not used it would lose much of its symbolic meaning. Wary of playing Russian roulette again after Cuba, or of provoking the intervention of Chinese forces, the US government sent troops to Vietnam to fight more for a draw than for victory, probably expecting the war would be another “police action,” as the Korean adventure was intended to be. A formal declaration of war was never issued. To this day, prominent military men led by General Westmoreland gripe bitterly that they were shafted by liberal media coverage and by politicians who would not “let them win” the war. But how could they have won—by turning all of Indochina into a nuclear crater?

The US had established a few outposts of colonial possession (Puerto Rico, the Philippines, etc.) at the end of the nineteenth century. The real story of colonialism in the USA was, of course, all about black slavery, the seizure of half of Mexico, and the destruction of the native Indian population, all of which took place within the country’s continental borders. World War I drew this country

further into “foreign entanglements,” and the power of the American state grew dramatically (as witness the effective extirpation of the anarchist movement at this time). By the end of that conflict New York had already surpassed London as the financial center of the world. But American cultural and political isolationism lasted largely intact until World War II, following which the US suddenly found itself master of world history and awkward guarantor of, if not outright heir to, the great colonial domains of the older European imperialisms. Having absorbed great waves of proletarian immigration from Europe in previous decades, the US now began to absorb Europe’s modernist culture and its intelligentsia.

Continuity with empires of the past was underscored by the burgeoning Secret intelligence networks, commissions, and think tanks serving the American state in its new role as supercop of the world. The primary role model has been the late great British Empire, although even ex-Nazis were requisitioned to serve in the preservation of Christian democracy. But the old style of empire, characterized by outright conquest, was no longer possible. The Pax Americana had to contend with a powerful bloc of Sino-Soviet states armed with atomic weapons and rising nationalisms everywhere. After the flush of military triumph over the Axis powers there had been cocky talk of an “American Century.” At the peak of US intervention in Vietnam’s civil war, however, it became clear that America’s effort to impose democracy on the world was succeeding

too well. The frontier and cowboy mythos of America's dominant culture took a nasty beating in the jungles of Vietnam, fighting a nationalist movement that had, ironically enough, originally identified itself with this country's own war of independence. American New Deal liberalism was another casualty of the war and the economic dislocations of the 1970s for which it was partly responsible. Johnson's "Great Society" was to have given the country "guns and butter." Since Vietnam we have seen a lot more guns and a lot less butter in our creaky and leaky minimal welfare state.

The American New Left placed great hope in the Maoist and Castroite doctrines that wars of national liberation would bring down world capitalism. The cheerleading cry of student demonstrators, "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh! NLF is gonna win" revealed their passive and contemplative reliance on third world struggles, as well as an ignorance of what these nationalist fronts actually stood for. As Ken Knabb put it, "The absence of a revolutionary movement in the US reduced the Left to a mass of spectators swooning each time the exploited in the colonized countries took up arms against the masters." That Mao, Castro, and Ho were all totalitarian bureaucratic dictators escaped the notice of American SDS militants, who subscribed to the abstract notion that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" and wallowed in hatred of themselves for being white and middle class. The Vietnamese revolution was the paradigmatic anti-colonial

struggle. Here the Man's butt was being kicked at the same time that the blacks were rising up at home, so it was easy for leftists (and for the mass counterculture, which was more or less in tow to the New Left) to accept the war against colonialism as a substitute for the proletarian revolution that would not materialize.

The number of students who became involved in violent terrorist actions as part of the Weather Underground was tiny; the main current of the movement accommodated liberalism and pacifism. The white American working class may have supported the war at first, but came to experience a great malaise about it, contrary to assertions by student radicals that the workers were all bought-off, gung-ho patriots. Nixon's program of "vietnamization," which included the beginnings of troop withdrawal in 1969, dulled the edge of the anti-war movement's militancy, even as the war was widened into Laos and Cambodia. Those who needed a cause to fight for, as well as those who went along for the ride, grew tired of marching. The miserable bolshevik sects that tried to capitalize on the movement began a process of splintering and infighting that has continued to this day as they travel the path towards a well-deserved oblivion. Many radicals convinced themselves they were fighting "fascist Amerika." The ferocious behavior of American forces in Vietnam, exemplified by the infamous Mylai massacre, and statements by Marshal Ky, one of South Vietnam's puppet rulers, that he admired Hitler, fueled this view. As

prominent an intellectual celebrity as Jean-Paul Sartre accused the US of committing genocide against the Vietnamese people. But for all the American brutality, the comparisons with Nazi Germany were a little exaggerated. In the 1930s those who really wanted to fight fascism went to Spain as volunteers. Those Americans fought with the Lincoln Brigade with the best of intentions, although they were ignorant then of Communist perfidy. In the New Left (which never ceased repeating the mistakes of the old Left), on the other hand, many sported NLF flags as a gesture of symbolic protest, but no one ever volunteered to go to Indochina to fight Yankee imperialism. Vietnam was a war without good guys, so any would-be knights of virtue looking for the “good fight” were bound to be disappointed.

I have already mentioned the paucity of accurate information about the authentic history of the Vietnamese revolutionary war. The Situationist International produced an analysis of it in 1967 that probably did not appear in English until well after the war ended. One good source is *The Race of Vietnam*, a pamphlet written by Bob Potter and published by the Philadelphia chapter of the London-based group Solidarity in 1970. Written from a councilist perspective, this pamphlet is critical of not only French, Japanese, and American imperialism (and its clients), but of its apparent enemies, the Soviet, Chinese, and North Vietnamese bureaucracies as well. Potter dissects the history of the conflict and machinations of the great

powers, then arrives at the sobering conclusion that there wasn't much revolutionaries in the West could have done about the situation. Other anti-authoritarian literature on the war published since the Communist victory in 1975 has emphasized the probability that a libertarian outcome was not in the cards. I have searched in vain (although not exhaustively) for any literature reporting even the existence of anarchists in Indochina. Nationalism was always the strongest revolutionary current in Vietnam, one the Communists exploited very successfully at a time when practically all of Asia was colonized by European powers. The spectacular clash between Japan and the United States, both *arriviste* powers, in World War II upset the old order and created favorable conditions for the success of anti-colonial movements.

In the 1930s there had been a large Trotskyist party in Vietnam with links to the labor unions in urban areas. This party often found itself in uneasy alliance with the Indochinese Communist Party, Ho's Stalinist party. By the end of World War II, however, all the Trotskyist leaders, such as Ta Thu Thau and Tran dinh Minh, were rewarded for their "loyal opposition" with assassination by the Vietminh. This was the organization that had evolved out of the ICP and was to beat the French and secure Communist power in the north. The population of Vietnam, composed mostly of peasants became a firm base of support for the Vietminh and later for the National Liberation Front, or Vietcong, formed in 1960 on Hanoi's

directives in order to undermine the US client regime (which had been set up in the south as a result of the 1954 Geneva Accords). The direct intervention of US combat troops starting in 1965 galvanized the support of the peasants for the NLF and the Hanoi bureaucracy. Hatred of the foreign invader far outweighed resentment of hardships endured under Communist rule. For the insurgent peasants of the south there was virtually no choice but to fight with the Vietcong since slavery, death, and destruction from the onslaught of the US military was the only alternative. There was never a real possibility of Makhnovist-style people's militias establishing regional bases of power or of a Durruti Column materializing out of nowhere. Under Communist leadership, the class struggle was entirely submerged in the service of the national revolution.

The Vietnamese people certainly deserved to win the war, but it was a pyrrhic victory. American bombs and defoliants destroyed much arable land, and the US trade embargo continues to cripple the economy. Rapprochement with the United States seems unlikely now but is not inconceivable in the future, given that similar campaigns in the past by the US government to isolate Communist countries eventually came to an end in favor of investment opportunities. Vietnam survives today on charity from the Soviet big brother. Not all of Vietnam's ills can be blamed on imperialism, of course. The party's policy of forced collectivization of agriculture has produced the

same results as similar campaigns in the USSR and China—recalcitrant peasants sabotaging production, resulting in artificial famine. The stories of the reeducation camps and the thousands of refugees are likewise all too familiar. But it was in Cambodia (Kampuchea), another part of the former French Indochinese empire, that Marxism-Leninism effectively finished its ignominious history and its credibility with the psychotic reign of the Khmer Rouge. The Vietnamese Communists have claimed for themselves the role of heroic rescuers for their invasion of Cambodia in 1978, which toppled the Pol Pot regime. How many will remember that what was to become the Khmer Rouge originated as a contingent of the Vietminh, and probably owed its victory to the assistance of Stalinists? I leave it to the reader to puzzle over the ideological confusion resulting from the effort to pick out the “real” Communists. The Vietnamese version of perestroika, known as “renovation,” has replaced heroic revolutionary ideology with the malaise of a lukewarm humanism. As the People’s Army returns from almost eleven years of inconclusive fighting in Cambodia, many Vietnamese wonder what it is they sacrificed for. Even the Khmer Rouge leadership has now reportedly disbanded its Communist Party and whatever appeal it still holds rests on its role as the most effective standard-bearer of Khmer nationalism against the Vietnamese.

The rulers of this country learned much from the Vietnam experience. Having been defeated by a peasant-

based insurgency in Indochina, US strategists such as Kissinger and Brezinski, European-born intellectuals who see themselves as the Metternichs of their time, shrewdly adopted a new geopolitical plan—the recuperation of Maoist “people’s war” strategy. This has entailed the raising and/or financing and arming of counterrevolutionary guerrilla armies such as the contras, UNITA and RENAMO, composed of indigenous proxies and mercenaries instead of American troops. It was recognized that the political cost of fighting endless counterinsurgency wars with American forces would be too high. Better to let a powerful and militant regional cop like South Africa do the job. The new strategy was to bend under pressure from the wave of anti-imperialist revolutions, but then to bleed them by turning their own methods against them. Public opinion in the television democracy would not have to be a problem as long as American soldiers were not dying by the thousands.

As for those who seek to negate the existing society, what is to be learned? The ideology of the third world enjoyed its heyday during the Vietnam War and carried over throughout the 1970s and much of the 1980s, in spite of the fact that capitalism has obviously survived the liquidation of colonial empire. The politics that has dominated what exists of a radical opposition to official American culture and society had its origins in the ideologies of revolutionary nationalism of the 1960s. The very success of the anti-colonial movements has dampened the

possible heroic and romantic appeal such movements might have in the future for the disaffected in the West. What is now known about the bloodthirsty qualities of contemporary Maoist-inspired guerrilla gangs such as Khmer Rouge, Sendero Luminoso, and Liberation Tigers of Eelam is enough to put most people off completely, except as a form of ghoulish titillation. Even black nationalism will probably not again attain the level of support it enjoyed among American blacks in the days of the Panthers, in spite of the undeniable persistence of racism in the US. The experience of corruption, exploitation, and endless military coups and dictatorships in the black African states emerging out of European colonialism has cast doubts on this form of vanguardism in South Africa, last bastion of white supremacist ideology. The struggle against the apartheid regime is carried out most effectively by the masses of workers exploited in the diamond and gold mines and not so much by guerrilla actions of the African National Congress.

The US radical feminist movement also gravitated toward a version of cultural nationalism (i.e., separatism) following disenchantment with the posturing of leftist males, although the feminists too were heavily influenced by third worldist ideology. Mao Zedong had said, "Women hold up half the sky," (a nice little homily, true enough in itself) and there was the example of the many women who fought in the ranks of the Vietcong. In its early days the "second wave" of feminism may or may not have been on

to something (there was in some quarters a critique of roles and a concept of a revolution of everyday life), but quickly degenerated into the swamp of political ideology. Feminism's principal currents have by now succeeded in entering the mainstream of bourgeois liberal reformist politics. The more radical currents have either ensconced themselves in the academic ivory tower, where they rival the Marxist professors in their privileged irrelevancy, or have gone off the deep end of male-hating lunacy. Andrea Dworkin's alliance in recent years with right-wing forces in favor of censorship and sexual repression gave the lie to any notion that feminism is in its very essence progressive. Even at their best, modern feminists have little, if anything, on Goldman, Luxemburg, or Kollontai. A detailed critique of feminism lies outside the scope of this essay. Others have already written on the subject better than I probably could. But insofar as many feminists themselves still explicitly identify the modern movement for the liberation of women with the uprisings of colonial peoples, I thought it germane to criticize this idea in connection with Vietnam. I will content myself for now with saying that, to my observation, militant ideological feminism travels a parallel path with leftism in its moralism and impotence. There are, of course, exceptions, women (some of whom will want to call themselves feminists and some perhaps not) with a libertarian orientation and a commitment to critical theory... let's see what they can do.

The Left is rapidly losing whatever residual power it

has to seduce the dispossessed and disaffected, and not just because of the tide of neoconservatism. Appeals to guilt and ascetic voluntarism don't cut it anymore. After all, this is exactly what Christianity stands for. In fact, the Left is nothing more than the desanctified product of Christianity's historical decay. This could be a sign that in the next round with Capital, humanity will more nearly approach the goal of ending its condition as a proletariat by dispensing with bureaucratic mediation. Certainly it is good to give support, to the extent possible, to people in other countries fighting against neocolonial domination. In the final analysis, however, they have to fight their own battles under the sorry conditions imposed on them, conditions which admittedly make our lives seem comfortable by comparison. True materialists can see that their real interests lie in their own lives and their own desires, at home. A revolution in the US ("belly of the beast") against the work machine and against the continuing appeal of nationalism and statism of every variety is worth much more than all the one-dimensional and sub-Leninist crusades directed against imperialism, racism, or sexism put together.

Far Eastern Bureau of the
Maximalist International

For a Congress of Weird Religions

Hakim Bey

We've learned to distrust the verb to be, the word *is*—let's say rather, note the striking resemblance between the concept SATORI & the concept REVOLUTION OF EVERYDAY LIFE: in both cases—a perception of the ordinary with extraordinary consequences for consciousness & action. We can't use the phrase “is like” because both concepts (like all concepts, all words for that matter) come crusted with accretions—each burdened with all its psycho-cultural baggage, like guests who arrive suspiciously overly-well-supplied for the weekend.

So allow me the old-fashioned Beat-Zennish use of “satori,” while simultaneously emphasizing—in the case of the Situationist slogan—that one of the roots of its dialectic can be traced to dada & Surrealism's notion of the marvelous, erupting from (or into) a life that only seems suffocated by the banal, by the miseries of abstraction & alienation. I define my terms by making them more vague, precisely in order to avoid the orthodoxies of both Buddhism & Situationism, to evade their ideologico-semantic traps—those broken-down language machines! Rather I propose we ravage them for parts, an act of cultural bricolage. “Revolution” means just another turn
for a congress of weird religions

of the crank—while religious orthodoxy of any sort leads logically to a veritable government of cranks. Let's not idolize satori by imagining it the monopoly of mystic monks, or as contingent on any moral code; & rather than fetishize the Leftism of '68 we prefer Stirner's term "insurrection" or "uprising," which escapes the built-in implications of a mere change of authority.

This constellation of concepts involves breaking rules of ordered perception to arrive at direct experiencing, somewhat analogous to the process whereby chaos spontaneously resolves into fractal nonlinear orders or the way in which wild creative energy resolves as play & poesis. *Spontaneous order* out of *chaos* in turn evokes the anarchist Taoism of the Chuang Tzu. Zen may be accused of lacking awareness of the "revolutionary" implications of satori, while the Situationists can be criticized for ignoring a certain "spirituality" inherent in the self-realization & conviviality their cause demands. By identifying satori with the revolution of everyday life we're performing a bit of a shotgun marriage fully as remarkable as the Surrealists' famous mating of an umbrella & sewing machine or whatever it was. Miscegenation. The race-mixing that was advocated by Nietzsche (attracted, no doubt, by the sexiness of the half-caste).

I'm tempted to try to describe in what way satori is like the revolution of everyday life—but I can't. Or to put it another way: nearly all I write revolves around this theme; I would have to repeat nearly everything in order

to elucidate this single point. Instead, as an appendix, I offer one more curious coincidence or interpenetration of two terms, one from Situationism again & the other, this time, from sufism.

The *dérive* or *drift* was conceived as an exercise in deliberate revolutionizing of everyday life—a sort of aimless wandering thru city streets, a visionary urban nomadism involving an openness to “culture as nature” (if I grasp the idea correctly)—which by its sheer duration would inculcate in the drifters a propensity to experience the marvelous, not always in its beneficent form perhaps, but hopefully always productive of insight—whether thru architecture, the erotic, adventure, drink & drugs, danger, inspiration, whatever—into the intensity of unmediated perception & experience.

The parallel term in sufism would be “journeying to the far horizons” or simply “journeying,” a spiritual exercise that combines the urban & nomadic energies of Islam into a single trajectory, sometimes called “the Caravan of Summer.” The dervish vows to travel at a certain velocity, perhaps spending no more than seven nights or forty nights in one city, accepting whatever comes, moving wherever signs & coincidences or simply whims may lead, heading from power-spot to power-spot, conscious of “sacred geography,” of itinerary as meaning, of topology as symbology.

Here’s another constellation: Ibn Khaldun, *On the Road* (both Jack Kerouac’s & Jack London’s), the form of

the picaresque novel in general, Baron Munchausen, wanderjahr, Marco Polo, boys in a suburban summer forest, Arthurian knights out questing for trouble, queers out cruising for boys, pub-crawling with Melville, Poe, Baudelaire—or canoeing with Thoreau in Maine... travels as the antithesis of tourism, space rather than time. Art project: the construction of a “map” bearing a 1:1 ratio to the “territory” explored. Political project: the construction of shifting “autonomous zones” within an invisible nomadic network (like the Rainbow Gatherings). Spiritual project: the creation or discovery of pilgrimages in which the concept “shrine” has been replaced (or esotericized) by the concept “peak experience.”

What I’m trying to do here (as usual) is to provide a sound irrational basis, a strange philosophy if you like, for what I call the Free Religions, including the Psychedelic & Discordian currents, non-hierarchical neo-paganism, antinomian heresies, chaos & Kaos Magik, revolutionary HooDoo, “unchurched” & anarchist christians, Magical Judaism, the Moorish Orthodox Church, Church of the SubGenius, the Faeries, radical taoists, beer mystics, people of the Herb, etc., etc.

Contrary to the expectations of nineteenth-century radicals, religion has not gone away—perhaps we’d be better off if it had—but has instead increased in power, seemingly in proportion to the global increase in the realm of technology & rational control. Both fundamentalism & the New Age derive some force from

deep & widespread dissatisfaction with the System that works against all perception of the marvellousness of everyday life—call it Babylon or the Spectacle, Capital or Empire, Society of Simulation or of soulless mechanism—what you wish. But these two religious forces divert the very desire for the authentic toward overpowering & oppressive new abstractions (morality in the case of fundamentalism, commodification in the case of the New Age), & for this reason can quite properly be called “reactionary.”

Just as cultural radicals will seek to infiltrate & subvert the popular media, & just as political radicals will perform similar functions in the spheres of Work, Family, & other social organizations, so there exists a need for radicals to penetrate the institution of religion itself rather than merely continue to mouth 19th cen. platitudes about atheistic materialism. It's going to happen anyway—better to approach it with consciousness, with grace & style.

Having once lived near the World Council of Churches Headquarters, I like the possibility of a Free Churches parody version—parody being one of our chief strategies (or call it *détournement* or deconstruction or creative destruction)—a sort of loose network (I dislike that word; let's call it a “webwork” instead) of weird cults & individuals providing conversation & services for each other, out of which might begin to emerge a trend or tendency or “current” (in magical terms) strong enough to wreak some psychic havoc on the Fundies & New-

Agers, even the ayatollahs & the Papacy, convivial enough for us to disagree with each other & yet still give great parties—or conclaves, or ecumenical councils, or World Congresses—which we anticipate with glee.

The Free Religions may offer some of the only possible spiritual alternatives to televangelist stormtroopers & pinhead crystal-channellers (not to mention the established religions) & will thus become more & more important, more & more vital in a future where the demand for the eruption of the marvelous into the ordinary will become the most ringing, poignant, & tumultuous of all political demands—a future which will begin (wait a minute, lemme check my clock) 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, NOW.



The Destruction of the UK's Mirror of Consumption

Dave W

The Poll Tax riot of Saturday, March 31, 1990 was the biggest riot central London has experienced this century and possibly the biggest since the twelve glorious days of the Gordon riots of 1780. The only ones that bear any comparison are those of the unemployed in the 1880s and 1930s, which were far less destructive in character. Unlike the incendiary and ferocious rioting of 1981 and '85, it took place not in inner-city neighborhoods but right in the spectral eye and mirror of commodity affluence. Never in recent history have the cold, barren, monolithic buildings of Whitehall civil service Depts at the heart of the UK state been taken over by a nameless wildness spreading havoc everywhere around them. Only to be followed by riot police clearing the clipped wings of the State in Trafalgar Square deliberately (and incompetently for them) pushing the rioters into the store window of UK PLC and the very tip-top (and "hip-hop on a cop") hype of the Thatcher retailing, designer revolution. A hype that was then ransacked, looted, and here and there burnt. Amidst the wildness the vandalism was very selective and more so than usual in contemporary UK riots. Posh cars like Jags and Porsches were burnt and the Renault show-

the destruction of the uk's mirror

rooms destroyed in Long Acre but an old, broken-down mini-major car was left unscathed. Liquor stores and music shops were pillaged, with expensive guitars nicked, but tool shops with smashed windows weren't looted (who among these youths wanted Bosch power tools for work??— although a mate did.) The rare stamp shop was done in and one wondered how such stamps could be fenced. Many of the really posh nosh shops down Regent St. with its aristocratic elan were done in too. By way of an aside, looters at Top-Girl in Oxford Circus couldn't get the anti-shoplifting electronic tag off expensive gear and in their haste tore it. Black girls in their longing for a bit of pricey flash ended up with shreds in their hands.

However Aer Lingus windows in Regent St weren't trashed. Not because it wasn't a business like any other but simply because of a growing general awareness that the British State had framed too many Irish people as IRA scapegoats and a can of worms was opening up in the British Judiciary replete with its logjam of police torturing acceptable as bona fide evidence in many court cases. Only two nights previously a TV program "Who Bombed Birmingham?" on the framing of the Birmingham Six (jailed for allegedly bombing two Birmingham pubs in '74, which resulted in many deaths) had grabbed peak viewing and in many local inner London pubs one could hear a pin drop while the program was shown on pub TV. At the impromptu speeches at Kennington before the Poll Tax long march everything was heckled and mocked, from the

Labour Party to the TUC to the Militant Tendency; but the splendidly irreverent crowd was silent when it came to Ireland even though much has to be said about the Irish situation that isn't palatable to anarchists or leftists.

But let's leave out descriptions of the hundreds of stores and businesses that were trashed etc. simply because many newspapers mentioned them and contained telling photos of destruction, even though, as is their shitty wont, a few individuals were given a fingering through press photos. Poor sods—a balaclava stuffed in the back pocket is still essential. However, except in your wildest moments, nobody really expected that there would be such an awesome outcome. Some violence yes but not destruction on this scale. What was breathtaking was the sense of enjoyment among those at the eye of the storm—an enjoyment coupled with fear/nerves and the parched throat of flowing adrenaline that needed a hard drink. An enjoyment that, when it hit the mirror of UK PLC, was passed onto the Saturday night consumers of the bright lights. There was really very little hostility to the ransacking of the West End (for once one felt at home there) by those who were its naked pay-up consumers. On the contrary, these punters tended to simplistically blame Thatcher and not the vandals, vikings, and Visigoths. People felt happy for once. (Official opinion polls have since confirmed this on-the-spot feeling with most blaming Thatcher for the rioting.)

The police, now named Stasi after the E. German secret police—the guttural chanted word comes easy to

the tongue (this must have disoriented quite a few E. German and Russian TV viewers still conned to the magic of the Thatcherite free-enterprise market)—didn't like clubbing too many window shoppers even though they split up quite a few well-heeled tourists. With others it was different. The Stasi attacked disco queues (most notably down Oxford Street) where young kids were grouped together, or kids walking out of pin-ball machine arcades. A number got arrested that way. At the behest of the publicans (?) the riot police closed down all the pubs in Soho which in itself caused battles inside the pubs and much running street fighting until after midnight.

Tourists from all over the world asked anti-Poll Taxers what was going on. The Japanese very politely. One black girl sporting an anti-Poll Tax badge replied to some Scandinavians' questions, "that's what we do in England; we riot," feeling proud to be English as she warmed her hands on a pile of blazing garbage. Once night had fallen one noted the presence of gangs of black youth moving in, maybe from London's huge Council Estates after having seen the trouble on TV? They did their share of damage and looting too. During the day there had been plenty of Blacks and Asians involved but not as a distinctive presence or contingent.

It's not really possible to characterize the riot beyond that it was a massive revolt of youth. Those involved in the heavy fighting were mainly, but by no means entirely, "politicized" marginal youth, into Squats, post-punk, New

Hippy, ET punters (Employment Training is a national form of Trainee Workfare scheme), heavy metal, airheads, etc. Were thousands of young fully-employed workers there? Students? And did some academic breakdown along those lines really matter? A hastily made black-linked "Yorkshire Miners Against the Poll Tax" was waved alongside the many Higgs and Hill building company partahabins on fire in a Trafalgar Square refurbishment. They were young miners four stories up in the scaffolding-ready for a bit of the high life. What became of them? Nicked by the riot police?

One gets the impression (others since have confirmed it) that some Higg and Hill building workers (on a weekend guard duty??) had opened up the site to rioters because earlier in the day a long banner had been unfurled down the side of the many storied building attacking the Poll Tax. Whatever, the burning building marked a kind of Rubicon. Afire near the center of the State. The rioting for a brief period stopped as if dumbfounded by its own achievement.

Then you noticed young civil servants and Town Hall staff putting the boot in too. Hardly surprising after all they're in the front line vis-a-vis Poll Tax registration and collection. Also they've been the first to respond with strikes and overtime bans and non Poll Tax cooperation. Their refusal had been sharpened and pushed forward by the earlier rioting in London and Bristol. Maybe Poll Tax was going to bring together that long overdue overlap between street riots and strikes? An overlap only briefly

sketched out in such mining communities as Fitzwilliam, South Elmsall, and Malthy in Yorkshire in 1984. There were a few older people in the thick of the fighting but not many; an arrested guy with gray hair repeatedly kept getting his head bashed by the police on a wall just outside the gates of Downing St (Thatcher's residence). Poor bastard! Will he have migraine for the rest of his life?

Equally, there were many from other countries, not directly affected by the Poll Tax but who added their bit to the fracas. French, Germans, Italians, Spanish, Chinese, and many a four XXXX Australian pissed out of their purposefully imitative Crocodile Dundee boxes. Three Americans (tourists?) laughed as they lopped a lump of brick at the cops in a corner of Trafalgar Square. Other Americans enjoyed it too and got carried away talking about it in the pubs afterwards. So finally also it was an international event, using the Poll Tax as an occasion to get at any of the police, at any international commodity alienation.

You met friends in the crowd—some you hadn't seen for many's a time—and then were instantly separated by the fighting. The bricks and wood were raining down fast and many got hit by the clobber from their own side. Me too, by a big brick on the leg (but aimed at the cop in front of me). The sky was often thick with ammo and many's the time you ducked from a flying Trafalgar Square pigeon thinking it was a brick. Smiling, you saw the riot police doing the same thing—putting a riot shield over their heads!

But it was scary. Three times I was really trapped by

the police going relatively berserk and if they'd wanted to apply the French techniques and gone in for a clubbing/tear gas massacre you would have been finished off. But like the 80s decade, the cops didn't abandon the olde English technique just like that. It was, however, sufficiently nerve-wracking pushed up against the walls of the National Gallery, surrounded on all sides by the police and with dusk beginning to fall, to think they were finally going in for the kill. Others thought the same too and once the police gave the rioters a push into the West End streets, they were only too pleased to go on, or so it seemed. Thus, ironically began the glitz potlatch and instead the West End shopping Mall was massacred.

The demonstration which was two hundred fifty thousand strong (though many newspapers like some latter-day East European propaganda fix-its put it at forty thousand) was outside of Labour Party or TUC control although the Militant Tendency (Trotskyist entryists inside the Labour Party) with their usual hijacking techniques claim a big part in organizing and leading this splendid rabble-without-leaders. Stewards at first tried, amidst much derision, to discipline the demo but once the heavy ten hours of rioting broke out they were nowhere to be seen. In the aftermath, the press and other pundits of the bourgeoisie faced with something spontaneously explosive tried to find out who was responsible for organizing the riot. What resulted on prime time TV news was unheard of—free publicity for anarchist groups like Class War, Black Flag anarcho-syndi-

calists, and the anarchist 121 bookshop in Brixton, which should give a massive boost to their newspaper sales etc. Of course, they were as little responsible as anybody else for the final outcome even though like anybody else they got stuck in too. In fact the pervasive atmosphere en masse was a certain well-intentioned, woolly-minded anarchism if one wished to (quite pointlessly) question the thoughts/meanings of participants. Basically the rioting feeling was non-sectarian and no one gave a fuck about theories.

But it's worth saying vis-a-vis banners, that the best were not the traditional Red and Black anarchist banners but those that took the piss and provoked laughter, like "Class War, rent-a-mob on Tour" or "We Want Robin Hood Again" held up by some 40-something, buxom, down-to-earth ladies from Liverpool. One noticed however in the days afterwards how anarchism suddenly acquired a very hip character on the streets and to call oneself an anarchist was the latest line in chatting up the guys and gals. The reality of the great potlatch of the temple of consumption was of course, far in advance of earlier anarchist limitations and still pointing to total revolution.

The Militant Tendency and SWP Trotskyists seem very fazed by the whole affair. A report in the *Socialist Worker* a week later didn't get the feel of the occasion—the sheer beauty of it—and as usual was cagey about smashed shop windows, burnt cars, and looting. So what's new? Militant continued with the shitty attitudes it had adopted towards rioters after the earlier Poll Tax battles in Bristol

and London. A Militant Tendency Anti-Poll Tax Federation leader, Tony Sheridan, said he would have no qualms about “informing the police” about any rioters the Federation could identify. They and the rest of the left are now in a quandary. If Militant (or related types) don’t organize another demo in a few weeks time they’re likely to be outflanked by anarchists and even more destabilizing for them, their “lunatic fringe” subliminal fears. This frightens them most of all and being so neurotically anxious not to be associated with violence they desperately wish that the whole anti-Poll Tax campaign was limited to civil disobedience.

The Labour Party is in an even greater quandary. If they don’t do something more aggressive against the Poll Tax, a real autonomous movement everywhere will slip the leash of bureaucratic control. And one means everywhere—from leafy green affluent market towns to industrial centers. Of course the Kinnockite Labour Party is much more right wing than ever and the law for them must be obeyed no matter what. A stance, in fact, which is different from the early 70s when they were prepared to go along with the TUC’s not very spirited defiance of the Heathite Tories hated Industrial Relations Act which was more or less destroyed by the miners and dockers wildcat General Strike of 1972. The Labour Left, now reduced to virtual silence, could re-assert itself and attempt to institutionalize the mass revolt against the Poll Tax.

But what’s at stake is something that goes right to the heart of Labourism. Their pride and *raison d’être* is basi-

cally local government and the reasonable, efficient, and extensive organization of services paid through the rates. Any attempt to destabilize these Labour heartlands—with support for a massive campaign of non-payment would mean not only shooting themselves through the foot but their fried brains as well. Oh what a pretty sight that would be. Deputy Labour Party leader, slob, spitting, Hattersly was in fact more vicious in his condemnation of the rioters than even Thatcher! All your old hatred of the Labour Party welled up inside you again...

But we shall see. Suffice to end with a few quick and relatively unworked thoughts. Poll Tax in the UK seems to stimulate a collective buried, historical psyche secreted somewhere in the subconscious that ends up tearing the whole fabric of alienated society apart. The first Poll Tax precipitated the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 even though the tax was then limited to some degree by a person's ability to pay and therefore less draconian than the present Poll Tax. Hampden's ship money (a similar head-count tax) and a levy raised for building up the King's Navy was a major factor in determining the outcome of the Civil War (1640-45). Interestingly enough, the first revolt against the Hampden's ship money occurred in Whitney, Oxfordshire where in early March 1990, 18 Tory Councilors were the first grass-roots Tories to rebel against the Poll Tax, an example that inspired many of the blue rinse brigade to contemplate doffing punk hair cuts and attitudes.

Finally, on a wider level of *unfair* taxation (all money

is *unfair*) fury over taxation without representation created the Boston Tea Party. Poll Taxes in Britain, England, Dis-United Kingdom (call it what you will) have the habit of bringing a social civil war in all its totality to the surface. As a friend said, Thatcherite Britain has many characteristics to pre-Civil War England: with its selling of State assets for quick profit, property speculation, etc. Was March 31, after a decade of protracted civil disorder periodically threatening to burst through the carapace of an extremely right-wing trajectory, our own homespun Boston Tea Party? The Poll Tax riot was magnificent, only to be eclipsed a day later on TV screens by the worst prison violence at Strangeways, Manchester that the UK has known this century—very obviously inspired by the big Poll Tax. Even the support group outside the gutted jail sang the anti-Poll Tax ditty. Many are reckoning on further big trouble throughout the UK, saying a May '68 is in the air. Riot records are being broken and we shall see what we shall see.

The Social War No.4

Paul Z. Simons

As humanity approaches the end of its second century enslaved to capital, perhaps only a single question is left, or is indeed even askable: "Will we ever be free of this nightmare?"

Such a statement, however, functions less as a rhetorical question than as a cynical allusion to the almost universal domestication of the human species. Where once a vigorous, angry populace threatened any government that even debated the levying of taxes, where once an eighteenth-century noble could complain that it was impossible to gather together one hundred artisans without an ensuing riot. Now we have only “social harmony,” a state of affairs so degraded that even so-called opposition movements, if they exist at all, designate their own “peace-keepers” during protest marches to ensure order.

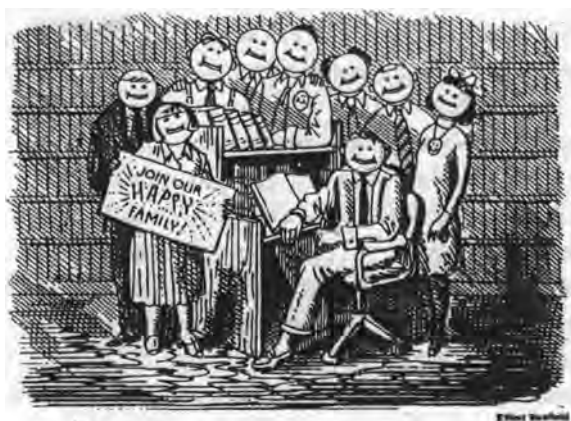
Social harmony must be seen in its true light, not as the guarantor of happiness, of peace— rather it is the result of the restraint of the total being that any individual might become. It is the result of coercion that emanates not only from the externalized reality of society (commodities, the spectacle, capital-as-being); its most effective bloodhound is the human mind itself, the internalized restraints and hierarchy that are implanted by society, and more importantly, for society. Significantly, however, the task of restructuring human consciousness has proved difficult for capital. Currently, it must constantly re-invent and re-assert itself to maintain its hegemony, and as the last decade has proven, such processes are proving less and less effective.

There are those who will argue that “social harmony,” while illusory in a pre-revolutionary society, should and

must be one of the final goals of any supposedly emancipatory revolution. Put simply, such individuals are the police, the legislators, the social engineers, the despots of the revolution. They are a new enemy in embryo and should be perceived and treated as such.

Clearly, the single task that presents itself now is that of social insurrection, the stripping away of centuries of consensus based on coercion, the elimination of all institutions without regard for the illusion of “negative” or “positive” influence. The ripping up of the social contract and the tearing down of the edifice of capital. “Social harmony” must also pass into the oblivion of history, not as something “once enjoyed” but rather as something once endured.

A century of social tranquility is worth a summer of INSURRECTION.



Watsonian Anarchism

Bob Black

ELEMENTARY WATSONIANISM

It was at work that I was driven into gridlock on the Damascus Road. Researching nuisance law (as if there was any other kind) I discovered *People v Amdur*, 123 Cal. App. 2d Supp. 951, 267 P. 445 (1954). In this 1954 decision, the court held that an anarchist who sets up a literature table near Sather Gate in Berkeley campus is guilty of creating a public nuisance. Although over thirty years have elapsed, as I contemplate anarchists like Jeff Strahl and Kevin Keating doing the same thing on the same spot today, I cannot gain-say the essential justice of this ruling. This insight, though, does not begin to exhaust the riches of the decision. When lawyers get their hands on a historic case they are wont to say “this is one for the casebooks.” *People v Amdur* is one of the mental-casebooks, for it asks the burning question: “What is a Watsonian anarchist?” Is he a follower of the Watson who invented misbehaviourism, such as B.F. Skinner? Or the Dr. Watson who came under the influence of his good friend Sherlock Holmes? First the facts.

On February 6, 1953, a police officer accosted Reuel S. Amdur as he manfully manned his table, stocked with literature decrying the Smith Act and the trial of the Rosenbergs. As Amdur had no permit, he was told to move

watsonian anarchism

along or face arrest. Whereupon Amdur uttered the words that would make him a criminal and forever a part of the law of the land: "Go ahead and arrest me. I am a Watsonian anarchist and will stand on my constitutional rights."

A Watsonian anarchist! Right then and there as I dawdled in the library of the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California I knew that I, too, was a Watsonian anarchist, whatever that was, come what may. (I always felt a bit out of place among the earnest activists of the ACLU. No member of a minority or deviant subculture feels more alienated than I did the day I joined the only other occupants of the library, a transvestite, a lesbian, and a dwarf.) But if I was the first to follow the Bigfoot tracks laid down by Amdur (since lapsed into the obscurity from which the police briefly raised him) I now know that I am not alone. Before Amdur was, I am.

A Watsonian anarchist spurns all the other hyphenated anarchists, mutualist-, syndicalist-, capitalist-, etc. A Watsonian anarchist is her own man. He is outside of and arrayed against the anarchist milieu in every form. And she thinks punk anarchists are, to paraphrase Celine, "much better firewood than a violin." (Even a little better than an electric guitar.) Genetically he sports the signature "Z" chromosome. She is a pathological truth-teller and so he is viewed with suspicion and hatred by anti-authoritarians. He declines whatever role the Invisible Government assigns her in the ideological division of labour, even the production of "biting fliers" for the amusement of anarchist jades.

Indeed, Watsonians don't play roles, they enact schiz. They regard Little Hans as a political prisoner, they delight that Dora survived the rapist Freud's joyless ministrations and grew up just in time for her attentat against Lenin. Sometimes a pipe is just a pipe.

On a scale from left to right, the Watsonian is off on a tangent. She is almost as anathema to the authorities as he is to the anti-authoritarians. Neither an individualist, capitalist, right-wing "type 1" anarchist nor a collectivism socialist, left-wing "type 2" anarchist, he is a type 3 anarchist and nobody's fool. She wrote *The Anarchist Cookbook*, he promises a chicken in every Kropotkin, if you prefer Ravachol with cheese, Spooner in, it's the Most! God damn, I De Cleyre, that's a Comfort if I Read you aright. A dead dogma makes her Thoreau up. A Watsonian is a loose cannon, he is over the edge. Any other anarchist can be trimmed to fit, the Watsonian throws one. The Watsonians are an aristocracy of egalitarians, they are Taoist overachievers, when yuppies tout workers councils they smell a Rat.

The small-minded might quibble that Watsonianism is nothing but an error in transcription. The opinion of the Superior Court (it had to be, to handle a Watsonian) admittedly does not recite Amdur's testimony, only the cop's. A pedant might piddle that the officer, who was perhaps ideologically unsophisticated, misunderstood Amdur who really said: "I am a Jeffersonian anarchist, and..."—echoing Benjamin Tucker's definition of an

anarchist as an unterrified Jeffersonian democrat (Watsonians are the only remaining unterrified anarchists). Or perhaps the officer unconsciously imputed to Amdur his own puzzled blurt: “A what-sonian anarchist?” Not every Watsonian has the gift of gab, but she always makes every syllable count. It matters not. So majestic and evocative an expression surely has some objective referent with which I, for one, am proud to be associated. If Watsonians did not exist they would have had to invent themselves. And they do, over and over again. A Watsonian is a moving target.

A Watsonian doesn't have to be a leftist, a feminist, a modernist, a humanist, or anything else but himself. She stands by his friends, unlike other anarchists, and he knows her ideas have practical implications no matter how often they have to be changed, hers is the purism of mutability. He treats everyone equally, hence egalitarians denounce her elitism. Because she is always consistent, no one ever knows what he'll do next. She's not a quitter, but he knows when to quit. She is a Watsonian anarchist. Beep beep!

John's Adventure

(for J.Z.)

Gerry Reith

(By the time of his violent death at age 24, Gerry Reith had

been by turns or concurrently a mental patient, an anti-nuclear activist arrested at Seabrook, a Bakuninist anarchist, a laissez-faire libertarian, a speed freak, and the author of essays, stories, and letters—I alone got hundreds of letters. No one interconnected the several subcultural scenes whose overlap became the marginals milieu with the intensity Reith did. He wrote to, argued with, drew from everyone as he played with the most disconcerting syntheses—at least in passing he was a laissez-faire councilist (council capitalist?) and a Menckenesque situationist. The following story is at once a parody and a tribute to John Zerzan, with whom Reith maintained a respectful but contentious correspondence.—Bob Black)

John heard a scream and looked up only to see a body rushing toward him. He stepped out of the way just in time and nearly vomited when his face was spattered with blood. The impact was solid—one of the limbs flew off, and the entire skull flattened out like a vase might.

I have to get out of here, he thought. Looking up again, he was amazed to see that another person had jumped, or been pushed. He started to run. Ahead of him, at the next intersection, a man was walking out into the street even though the light was red. Before John could yell “Watch out!”, a limousine plowed into the jaywalker, with startling force. Contorted into strange angles, the body flew up into the air and landed on the roof of the limo, bouncing off and finding rest behind the bumper.

The limo had stopped in a squeal of brakes. Now John heard another loud horn as a business van skidded, rocking back and forth, before the loud smack and grinding crunch as it struck the limo. The force of the van caused it to roll over, and another unlucky car served to absorb the momentum.

A fire broke out, and there were shrieks and loud moans. Then a gas tank exploded, and the whole intersection was a giant inferno. More cars continued to smash into each other in a parody of chaos. Sirens sounded in the distance, adding that peculiar edge of panicky glee to the scene.

"I'm not going to cross that street," John said to himself. He decided to go into the bank to his right and watch from behind thick windows.

A shot rang out as soon as the door had closed behind him. Then another. A gruff voice yelled across the room. A woman begged for mercy. The robbers, evidently, were angry about the accident in the street because now their getaway route was cut off. They had decided to slay the occupants of the bank in retaliation for their bad luck, and were doing so with alacrity. John left the way he had entered, quickly.

Out on the street again, he walked back to the scene of the high jumps and pushed his way through the crowd. Now there were six bodies, in various states of explosion, and one more was on the way. Everyone around John was gasping, delighted and disgusted.

Freeing himself from the spectators, he walked on, and managed to make headway for a few blocks. Across the street there was a roar, and the sound of tinkling glass. A wave of hot air nearly knocked him off his feet, and John started running when he saw that the bomb that exploded had also started a fire on the first floor and threatened to bring the entire building crumbling down. It was an old building, noted for the unusual tilt that a settling foundation had imparted upon it. The structural stress was too much, in fact, and John stopped and stared for a moment as the ancient brick walls gracefully dove into oblivion. The cloud of dust engulfed him as he turned and walked on.

A voice called to him from out of a darkened doorway. A woman was there, yelling for help, being raped by a large black man. The rapist looked dangerous, so John moved on, figuring that rape prevention was of no consequence any more.

Pretty soon he got home. Sitting at his kitchen table, he glanced at the newspaper headlines. "Disaster Strikes In Small Midwestern Town," said one. "Cannibals Apprehended," "Stock Market Crashes," said some others. All of a sudden the door was kicked in.

It was a policeman. "You are under arrest," the policeman said.

"What for?"

"Don't worry about that now, just come along with me."

John contemplated resisting, but saw that it would be

futile as the policeman was waving a gun in his face. As he stepped out into the hall, he saw that everyone in the building was being arrested.

"Look here," John said. "What's this all about?"

The policeman read him his rights and slapped a pair of handcuffs on his wrists. "You are under arrest for second degree complicity."

"Complicity in what?"

"Ask the judge, big mouth." The cop gave him a slap in the face. "And don't say another word."

Just then a machine gun opened fire from the direction of the elevators. John jumped on the floor and hid behind the body of his arresting officer. A bullet tore painfully into his shoulder.

Then it stopped, and John heard the old elevator start to rise. He lifted his head, cautiously, and saw that everyone except for one old wino was dead. The wino moaned piteously.

John rose as best he could. Wrestling with the body of the policeman, he found the keys to the handcuffs and managed then to free himself. He took the gun and ammo belt just in case.

When he got to the elevator, he pressed the button for down and heard a loud snapping noise and some yells, muffled, as if from behind a wall. He looked to see if someone was behind him. A policeman was moving.

"Die, pig!" he called out, firing a bullet. John smacked his lips in satisfaction at the clean hole in the man's head,

the blood rushing out. Then he grew alarmed at a rushing sound, and realized he would have to use the stairs.

Walking down he had to wade through festering mounds of offal. Children in the building made a habit of leaning over the rails to defecate, and anyone that was too tired to take the garbage downstairs just pitched it into the abyss.

Outside again, it was dark. He hailed a cab and shot the driver. Driving, he had fun running over a bicyclist and several tots who were playing a game on the sidewalk. He was going to see his former wife.

“Darling, I love you,” she said when she opened the door. “Why do you have to keep pestering me?”

“I have a stomach virus, why do you think?”

“Let’s make love. I’m horny after all these years.”

“No, Marlene, I’m tired of your games.” He drew his gun and saw her expression, stark terror. With a blank face he pulled the trigger until it simply clicked on empty chambers. The bullets sliced through her midsection, and the body fell to the ground.

Stooping over, he grabbed into the perforations and caught hold of a section of intestine. Giving a yank he began to pull out a string of soft warm tubing that he wrapped around himself like a flower at the maypole dances. Then he danced. He danced around the room, pulling a bookcase over, smashing the glasses in the pantry, clawing at the peeling paint on the walls. He turned the television set on and watched it for awhile in silence. Then he dragged the

bloody remains of his sister all around the room. He made fingerprints with the blood, decorating the refrigerator, the washer/dryer, the broken windows, the Persian rug, the books. When he was satisfied by that he drew a big knife from a drawer and severed the poor woman's head, which he attached with a string to a little toy red cart. Some more string, and he had a comfortable handle.

Out in the hallway again, he knocked on several doors before one of them opened.

A grisly sight the occupant saw: an executive-type, in a three-piece, with intestines dangling from his shoulder and neck, pulling a little red cart that bore a bloody severed head.

"Come on in. I was just heating some coffee," said the man in the door.

"No, no, I was just stopping by, I thought I might tell you the news about your best friend, he died in the Congo of yellow fever last night."

"Oh, no!" The man put his hands up to cover his face, and John saw his opportunity. He raised his knife and plunged it into the man's shoulder. Then he disemboweled the body.

"At last," he said to no one. With that he removed his clothes and painted his body with blood squeezed from the meat on the floor. "Now I can be respectable once again."

"Yes? Can I help you?" It was the cleaning lady.

"Give me that vacuum and beat it, you bitch!"

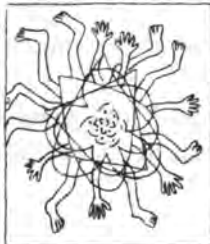
She dutifully handed over the rusting machine and left. John opened the window and tossed the vacuum out, not a second too late. The vacuum hit home, a windshield, with a loud crack, and John watched as the careening vehicle smashed into a bridge abutment under the railway crossing.

He went to the next door down the hall and kicked it in.

“Hi, honey, how was your day at work?” She gazed at him appealingly.

“Oh, okay, I guess,” John grunted.

He’s always grouchy after the office, she reflected.



Decadence

Major Bellows

There is no decadence from the point of view of humanity. Decadence is a word that ought to be definitively banished from history.

Ernest Renan

The word *decadence* has been thrown about so much it has become a banality. Authorities or would-be authorities of all kinds (religious or political ideologues, the media) lecture to us about the decline of western civilization. On close examination the meaning of this term, whether used as an epithet or as a badge of honor, turns out to be elusive. In a general sense decadence seems to be connected to fatalism, anomie, malaise, and nostalgia. It describes a falling away of standards of excellence and mastery associated with a bygone age of positive achievement; heroism yielding to pettiness; good taste yielding to vulgarity; discipline yielding to depletion, corruption, and sensuality. Decadence has connotations of (over-) indulgence in carnal appetites, derangement of the senses, and violation of taboos. It is supposed to be a frivolous pursuit of exotic and marginal pleasures, novelties to serve jaded palates. Decadence makes you think of sin

decadence

and over-ripeness.

Physics recognizes a law of decay and decline with universal application to all natural processes. It is called the second law of thermodynamics, or entropy. According to this law, there is a natural and increasing tendency in the universe toward disorder and the dissipation of energy. Efforts to arrest the process of decay and create order are only temporary in effect and expend even more energy. Through this inexorable process of entropy, astronomers tell us, the sun will eventually burn out, and the entire universe may well collapse back upon itself in a “Big Crunch” that will be the opposite of the theorized “Big Bang” with which it supposedly began. There’s nothing anyone can do about this cosmic decadence, but the time frame involved is so immense that there’s no point worrying about it, either. Besides, it’s just a theory. For the purposes of this essay, I will restrict myself to a consideration of the earthbound and largely historical dimensions of decadence.

Health and Disease

In a grand historical sense, the concept of decadence has been used to describe epochs of civilization in biological metaphor, as beings that are born, come to maturity, then sink into senescence and die because they have been condemned “by History” (or God). In this sense decadence is connected to a moralistic as well as a fatalistic vision. The word implies judgment of human experience on a

scale of values and measures it against a “correct” or “healthy” standard. Decadence first appeared as an English word during the Renaissance (according to Webster’s, in the year 1549) but its use remained sporadic until the nineteenth century. It can therefore be thought of as primarily a modern concept, and as such it is inescapably linked to the notion of Progress, as its opposite and antagonistic complement.

What lies on either side of Decadence, before or after it, is the myth of a golden age of heroism and (near) perfection. The ancient civilizations tended to place the golden age of their mythologies in the past. Judaism and by extension Christianity and Islam also have a golden age, the Garden of Eden, located in the past. But it is with the monotheistic religions that the dream of cosmic completion was first transferred to the future, in an eschatological and teleological, semi-historical sense. Christian theology underwent a long decay through Renaissance humanism, the Reformation (in particular its unofficial, suppressed antinomian and millenarian currents), and the rationalist, materialist philosophy of the Enlightenment. The French and American revolutions partially destroyed the Christian time line and opened up the horizon of a man-made history. The violent irruption of the bourgeois class into terrestrial political power replaced the inscrutable cosmic narrative written by God shrouded in grandiose myth with a historical narrative authored by abstract Man and wallowing in the Reason of political ideologies. The dogma

of determinism survived, however. Apocalypse, Heaven, and Hell were shunted aside by capitalism, which offered instead its absurd dialectic of revolution and reaction, progress and decadence. As the nineteenth century unfolded, liberalism, Marxism, and leftism continued the practice of identifying progress with industrial development and the expansion of democracy.

All of the great epochs of civilization (slavery, oriental despotism, feudalism, and capitalism) are considered by Marxist and non-Marxist historians alike to have experienced stages of ascendancy, maturity, and decline. The Roman Empire is one of the chief paradigms of decadence, thanks largely to the eighteenth-century English historian Gibbon and the French *philosophe* Montesquieu, the most well known chroniclers of its decline and fall. The reasons for the end of the ancient world are not so obvious, in spite of a familiar litany of symptoms, most of which are linked to economic causes: ruinous taxes, over expansionism, reliance on mercenary armies, the growth of an enormous, idle urban proletariat, the slave revolts, the loss of the rulers' will and purpose in the face of rapid change, and the most obvious and immediate reason—military collapse in the face of the "barbarian" invasions. These facts don't explain everything. Can it be said that Christianity's rise to power amid the proliferation of cults was an integral part of the decay, or was it rather part of a revolution that transcended decadence? It is not at all clear that the Roman Empire ended according to an iron law of historical determinism. If

that were the case, it is not likely that decadence could be imputed to “moral decay.” The actual collapse of the Western Empire came centuries after the reign of the most depraved emperors, such as Nero and Caligula. And should it be said that the Empire was decadent, while the Republic was not? Both were supported by the slave-labor mode of production, and both were systems of extreme brutality and constant warfare. The notion of progress and decadence, retrospectively applied to this case, implies that the civilization based on slavery was not only tolerable and acceptable but indeed healthy, in the bloom of its historical youth, and only later became poisoned and morbid.

The same observation applies, of course, to the other ancient civilization of the West—Greece, which was superior to Rome in so many ways because of its democracy and its fine achievements in art, literature, science, and philosophy. The Athens of Pericles is usually considered to have been the high point of that civilization, in contrast to the “decadence” of the Alexandrian or Hellenistic age. But there would have been no Greek art or Athenian democracy without Greek slavery. There is the great tragedy; the beautiful things of civilization have always been built on a foundation of bloodshed, mass suffering, and domination. The other great classic of decadence in the grand historical sense is the *ancien regime* in France. This example serves as the core vision, dear to the modern Left, of a tiny handful of identifiable villains: the corrupt, obscenely privileged, and sybaritic

aristocrats, oblivious to the expiration of their heavenly mandate, partying away on the backs of the impoverished and suffering masses, but who get their just desserts in the end. This was of course a partial truth, but it was built into a myth that has fueled similar myths well into our own time, the classic modern example being that of the Russian Revolution. The great revolution that chases out decadence has been multiplied more than a dozen times since. But this dream that has been played out so many times is still a bourgeois dream, though draped in the reddest “proletarian” ideology. It is the dream of the Democratic Republic, which replaces one ruling class with another, and it has always turned into a nightmare.

Against the decadence of the old world of the feudal clerico-aristocracy, the Jacobins proclaimed the Republic of Virtue. The mode of cultural representation with which the revolutionary bourgeoisie chose to appear at this time—as a reincarnation of the Roman Republic—deliberately broke with Christian iconography. But it set a precedent for conservative, and eventually fascist, cultural ideology—the identification of social health with the classical, the monumental, and the realistic. The Jacobin regime of emergency and impossibly heroic ideals quickly fell, and the entire political revolutionary project of the bourgeoisie in France was rolled back (more than once) by a resilient aristocracy. But the reign of Capital was assured, for its real power lay in the unfolding, irresistible juggernaut of the economy. This juggernaut was already

much further under way in England, while in Germany the bourgeoisie advanced only under the banner of philosophy and the arts.

Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century

The triumph of ascendant capitalism in the nineteenth century brought forth an unending cultural and human crisis as the bourgeoisie and its allies in the patriot aristocracy, even while continuing their struggle with feudal monarchy, fought also to contain the Utopian liberatory impulses unleashed by their own initial revolutionary impossibilism. The vaunted progress of the bourgeoisie—technological conquest of nature, industrial pollution, dull-minded positivist rationalism, and philistine demand for the proof of usefulness—had resulted not in a best of all possible worlds, but rather in a massive degradation of human experience. In addition to the proletarians enslaved in the factories, there were rebellious souls from more privileged social strata (the bourgeoisie itself, very often the aristocracy, and the middle classes) who revolted against the new conditions of alienation, in which Modernity and Progress were leading to disintegration of the self and nausea at the corrosion of spiritual values. These people looked to the demimonde of *La Bohème* (“the realm of the Gypsies”) as an escape from and protest against bourgeois life. Art no longer in service, as it had been for centuries, to autocratic and ecclesiastical patronage, became “for itself.”

France, and more particularly Paris, became the great laboratory of social and cultural experiment outside the margins of respectability began the march of artistic “isms” seeking to negate the commercial reality of the bourgeois reign and always succumbing to recuperation by that commercial reality.

The term *La Decadence* refers specifically to a period of European cultural history covering roughly the last two decades of the nineteenth century and sometimes the beginning of the twentieth century as well. This period, also commonly known as the *fin de siecle* or the *belle epoque*, encompassed such movements as Symbolism, Art Nouveau (*Jugendstil*), Post-Impressionism, and the Parnassian poets, as well as those referring to themselves as Aesthetes or Decadents. The phenomenon of Decadence is best understood as the continuation and denouement of an earlier movement—Romanticism. Decadence and Romanticism are of a piece.

The Romantic movement began definitively late in the eighteenth century as a largely aristocratic revolt against the soulless, destructive engine of Capital's Industrial Revolution. The countries principally affected by these developments were England, France, and parts of the German-speaking world. (The second wave of the Industrial Revolution occurred later in the nineteenth century and involved Germany, Northern Italy, Japan, European Russia, and the United States.) Although Romanticism, and later Decadence, resonated throughout

Europe and the United States, their main centers of activity were always Paris and London. Throughout the course of the nineteenth century there was a lively exchange of influence between French and English poets, writers, and painters. In this essay I am concerned mostly though not exclusively with developments in France.

More Definitions

The word *romantic* is often contrasted with the word *classical*. The distinction between the two, originally drawn by Goethe and Schiller, consists basically in this: Classical is associated with naturalness, intellect, balance, universality, and rationalism; romantic with the revolt of worldly ideas, passions, and spontaneity against conservative, ascetic, or chastened ("uptight") ideals. This is strikingly similar to the distinction Nietzsche was later to make between the Dionysian and the Apollonian sensibilities. The reference in that case was to the Dionysiac movement of sixth century BC Greece, which saw itself as a revolt of mystical, chthonic nature against the solar divinities of the Dorians. Dionysus was the god of wine and revelry, Apollo the god of the sun and the leader of the muses. From this example it can be seen that Romanticism has precursors going back to antiquity. (Another example of ancient revelry with contemporary survivals was the Roman holiday of Lupercalia, a time of riotous feasting, fornication, and fun. The Catholic Church found itself obliged to co-opt many of the pagan

holidays because it could not suppress them. This was the case with Lupercalia, which persists to this day in such forms as the Mardi Gras of New Orleans and the Carnival of Rio de Janeiro.) Although there may be an antagonism between the classical and the romantic, classicism can be a moment of romanticism (i.e., in the attempt at reviving pagan antiquity or any vanished civilization). Nietzsche saw both the Apollonian and the Dionysiac worldviews as essential elements of human nature.

“Romantic” first appeared in English around the middle of the seventeenth century and originally meant “like the old romances.” It looked back with nostalgia to the chivalrous and pastoral world of the Middle Ages, when the Romance languages were becoming differentiated from Latin, or, going back still further, to the epic tales of ancient Greek heroes. The sensibility connoted by the word as used at that time stood in contrast with the growing rationalism of the Enlightenment, which, as the brother of commerce, was obsessed with the mundane and the quantitative. Many of the major themes that were to preoccupy the Romantics—the fantastic, the macabre, the wild and mysterious, the satanic and infernal—were also prefigured in the works of Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton. As a flight of the imagination, Romanticism found expression in all the arts, but was perfectly suited to the medium of literature. It is significant that the English word “novel” has as its equivalent in both French and German the word *roman*. “Romantic” has

affinities with other words such as “romanesque,” “gothic,” “baroque” (all used to describe successive styles of architecture since the fall of the western Roman Empire and meaning by turns, fabulous, chimerical, grotesque, and flamboyant); and *pittoresque* (picturesque).

That last word, French but Italian in origin (*pittoresco*), described not only a scene, a landscape in particular, but also the emotions it induced in the observer. It was the feeling sought by young English gentlemen of the eighteenth century who were sent by their families on the “Grand Tour” of Italy to round out their education. (This practice preceded but may very well have launched the era of mass tourism.) Here they would admire classical ruins, Renaissance art treasures, and the wild beauty of the Alps, and perhaps hope to meet an intriguing princess or countess. Italy was also attractive to German intellectuals and artists. Goethe, Mendelssohn, and Nietzsche are among those who either traveled or lived there.

The most influential and archetypal figures of Romanticism were George Gordon, Lord Byron and D.A.F. de Sade (the “divine Marquis”). These men pursued with uncommon vigor the beauty of the perverse and explored the mysterious bond between pleasure and pain. They were the most visible incarnations of aristocratic monstrosity and excess. The figures of vampire, Satan, demon lover, sadist, evil genius, and noble bandit they represented became much-imitated sources of inspiration to later generations of writers, among whom were Baudelaire,

Huysmans, Swinburne, D'Annunzio, and many others.

There are some distinctions between High Romanticism and Decadent Aestheticism, in spite of their essential affinity. In Romanticism, Man is strong and cruel (e.g., the Byronic, Promethean, or Faustian hero) while Woman is weak and victimized; in Decadence the roles of the sexes are reversed. Romanticism is concerned with action and furious passion; Decadence is passive and contemplative. Romanticism often championed revolutionary social ideals, represented most notably by the English Romantics' initial identification with the Great French Revolution, and also by support for national liberation or unification movements in Italy, Poland, Hungary, Greece, and the Latin American republics—Wagner and Baudelaire both turned up on the barricades in 1848-49. These kind of commitments had largely faded by the time of the Decadence, which occurred in an unusually extended epoch of relative social peace and which tended for the most part to disdain politics in favor of *l'art pour l'art*. Baudelaire himself disavowed political involvement in favor of dandyism. Those artists of the later nineteenth century most concerned with social critique were of the realist and naturalist schools and identified with socialism, such as Courbet and Zola. This situation began to change, however, in the 1890s, as I will discuss later.

The Decadent aesthetic can be summarized as follows: the quest for the rare, sublime, and ultrarefined; the

rejection of natural beauty; antifeminism; and the celebration of “perversion” and artificiality.

Gotterdammerung

A salient feature of the *fin de siècle* was the advent of a great religious crisis that had been building up steadily since the Revolution. The Roman Catholic Church, which had been losing ground for a long time (since Copernicus), saw its authority decay more rapidly than ever before the advances of nineteenth-century positivist science. The spiritual vacuum produced by this led to what could be called the first stirrings of the “New Age”: the resurrection of heterodox spiritual practices from previous epochs; such as Satanism, occultism, and Rosicrucianism. fascination with vampires, werewolves, etc.; and a burgeoning interest in Eastern doctrines, such as Mme Blavatsky’s Theosophical Society, which was imported into France by way of Britain and the United States. Many French and English (or Irish) writers and poets adhered to Roman Catholicism as a purely aesthetic ritual emptied of faith. Needless to say, they were scorned by the Church.

The spirit of gloom and decline among the Decadents was fed by the writings of Arthur Schopenhauer, a philosopher of passive nihilism par excellence who became more popular in France than he had ever been in his native Germany. Schopenhauer’s central concept was that life is pointless suffering and that the only pleasures are cerebral, fleeting, and negative. His advice to humanity

was to drop dead, literally. In a strong echo of Buddhist or Hindu doctrine, he said that it is best to renounce sexual and all other desire: the Ideal is the nirvana of nonexistence. The Decadents followed this prescription for stone-cold reverie and agreed with his profound misogyny as well.

The wish for annihilation found expression in a great lament over the decline of Latin civilization. The Decadents sought to reconstruct poetically the vanished worlds of ancient Rome, Byzantium, and the Hellenized Orient. They had a keen sense that Paris and London were the new" Byzantium or Babylon. In France especially the feeling of decline was acute because of the humiliation of defeat at the hands of Prussia in 1871, coupled with the knowledge of lagging behind England in economic power and development.

Sex, Drugs, Rock n' Roll

The use of drugs, which previously had been the exotic vice of a few (e.g., De Quincey's and Coleridge's indulgence in laudanum) became widespread at the end of the nineteenth century. Absinthe, also known as the "green fairy," was one of the most popular, and for a long time legal, alcoholic drugs. Morphine had been used extensively for the first time as a surgical anesthesia by both sides during the Franco-Prussian War, and the French conquest of Indochina in the 1870s and '80s brought in a large quantity of opium. Many literary productions of this time were concerned with descriptions of drugged, hallucinatory states

of consciousness, though none measured up to De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1822).

The Romantics and Decadents emphasized eroticism as the driving force of culture. The expression of Desire as power, deceit, cruelty, and unlimited egotism and love of crime was first explored in excruciating detail by Sade and by his contemporary, Choderlos Laclos. There had been eroticism in literature since Chaucer and Boccaccio in the fourteenth century, but it wasn't until the late eighteenth century that there was a lot of sexual imagery in western culture. From then on, the assertion of the animal nature, in all its 'polymorphous perversity', of humans appeared with increasing occurrence to blaspheme Christian dogma, tweaking the noses of the Catholic Church in France and the Protestant churches in England (though the great majority of the bohemian rebels in question, including the English ones, were Catholic, either by upbringing or by conversion). The themes of narcissism, male homosexuality, lesbianism, sadomasochism, incest, and hermaphroditism or androgyny that appear frequently in the literature of Romanticism sometimes provoked wrath and repression from the authorities. The Marquis de Sade spent the greater part of his adult life in prison, having been sentenced repeatedly by both *ancien regime* and Revolutionary courts, not so much for his deeds as for his unacceptable imagination; Oscar Wilde was broken by the scandal, trial, and prison sentence that resulted from his love affair with another man.

The late nineteenth century was a time of expanding knowledge about human sexuality (part of a process, going on since the Renaissance, of recovering the eroticism that had been so freely accepted in the ancient world), and the art and literature of the time seemed to have an understanding of the unconscious basis of the sexual drive. In the 1880s Sigmund Freud was a student in Paris, studying under the neurologist Charcot, who conducted research on a condition that was then known as *hysteria*. Other pioneering efforts at a more or less scientific understanding of the psychology of sex included Richard von Krafft-Ebing's inventories of perversions, Havelock Ellis's classifications, and the writings of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch. In light of contemporary views, some of these efforts may seem to have been fruitful (or at least interesting); others may be seen as faulty or inadequate due to Victorian, bourgeois, and patriarchal biases. At the time they served chiefly to debunk romantic love.

The Decadents took a dim view of love between men and women. Much of the time they made Woman the target of their spleen (nearly all the artists were male). Women were held in contempt as creatures enslaved to nature and instinct and incapable of reason. This trend was part of an overall fascination with and fear of nature as a dark, fecund, and devouring force. One of the most familiar motifs of the Decadence was that of the *femme fatale*, sphinx, and "Belle Dame sans Merci" (Keats), who victimized men, tearing them to pieces or otherwise

luring them to madness, ruin, and death. Cleopatra, the Queen of Sheba, Carmen, Helen of Troy, and many versions of the Judith/Salome theme were familiar characters in the art and literature of the *fin de siècle*. The connection between pleasure and pain was extended into a bond between love and death. This eventually reached the point of becoming a mirrored inversion of Christianity's war against the body and its equation of sexual pleasure with sin and damnation. Pissing on the altar was another form of worship, and indeed, some rebels and apostates became prodigal sons and returned to the bosom of the Mother Church or some other "true faith" (as was to be the case among the Surrealists as well).

Mannerism, Myth, and Legend

The cult of artificial beauty led the Decadents to prefer plants made of jewels to real vegetation and to admire the icy beauty of crystals, metals, and precious stones. The more rare, refined, or fragile something was, the better, in their estimation. The taste for baroque ornamentation and metamorphosis inspired the Art Nouveau movement, which included such works as the drawings of Aubrey Beardsley, the posters of Alphonse Mucha, and the fantastic architecture of the Spanish (Catalonian) visionary Antonio Gaudi. Art Nouveau cultivated a craft sensibility, often employing floral designs, that opposed modern machine mass production. In a similar vein, the Arts and Crafts movement led by the English artist and Utopian socialist

William Morris sought to revive medieval guild craftsmanship in the arts in a time that saw the advent of automobiles, cinema, mass advertising, and machine guns.

The Romantics and Decadents loved the fabulous and the fantastic and considered the dream superior to reality in all respects. Their quest for artificial paradises included a resurgence of interest in the traditional mythologies of many cultures: Greco-Roman, Nordic, Egyptian, Jewish, and Hindu. Arthurian legends—Avalon, Merlin, Guinevere, and the Holy Grail—were great favorites, as were Shakespeare's fairy-tale comedies. Richard Wagner, whose operas drew upon German, Nordic, and Celtic legends for their source material, was the object of a cult of admiration in the nineteenth century. To many, it seemed, the only fit remedy for an unpleasant contemporary reality was escape into a medieval fable world of dragons, unicorns, troubadours, noble ladies, and chivalrous, heroic knights.

Orientalism

Besides the Anglo-French Byzantium of decadent democracy, the "civilized world" at the end of the nineteenth century included five great autocratic empires that were all in a much more serious stage of decline: the Romanov dynasty in Russia, the Hohenzollern-Junker dynasty of Prussia, the Hapsburg monarchy of Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Turkish empire, and the Qing dynasty of China. All of them contributed certain features

of *La Decadence* as it was produced and experienced in western Europe. Berlin and Moscow were, as cultural centers, completely in the shadow of Paris until the twentieth century. Vienna, though also subordinate to Paris, was the cosmopolitan capital of a great multinational Catholic empire and a hot spot of bohemian activity in its own right at the turn of the last century. (Its political ferment also served at that time as the incubator of both Nazism and Zionism.) The Ottoman Empire provided an important source of Romantic and Decadent imagery, particularly as England and France were in the process of dismembering it piecemeal and making colonies out of the Arab portions of it. The occidental fascination with, fear of, and desire for control over the Orient (Arab and Turkic lands, Persia, India, and China) had been of long standing going back earlier than the Crusades and continuing through the Eastern contacts made by traveling adventurers and merchants from Portugal, Spain, England, France, Holland, and the Northern Italian republics. This fascination became magnified in the nineteenth century as the Napoleonic wars extended British and French imperial rivalry toward the East. The wild and colorful Arabs made a significant appearance in European art at this time (e.g., in the paintings of Eugene Delacroix in the 1830s, after France had taken possession of the Algerian coast). In the nineteenth century there were also numerous paintings and literary descriptions of harem scenes and the opulent court life of the sultans, beys, and pashas.

These images were steeped in the mystique of “Orientalism,” a colonial vision, either overtly or subtly racist, of the East as a region cruel, lustful, and exotic; alluring for its real or potential riches; and populated by inferior peoples practicing weird religions and customs, who may once have had great civilizations of their own (which had helped make this one possible) but who were now in need of the paternal, Christian capitalist guiding hand of the “white man’s burden” or *la mission civilisatrice*.

Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun

The era of the Decadence or late Romanticism ended approximately around 1900. In the 1890s, reaction to Decadence began to set in. Apparently the unrelenting pessimism, nostalgia for extinct civilizations, and indulgence in pure fantasy became wearisome. In their place appeared a tendency toward pantheism and a rehabilitation of nature and women. In the work of artists such as Eric Gill, Felix Vallotton, and Pierre Bonnard the female body and sensuality were celebrated. The end of the last century also produced movements of incipient modernism (e.g., Symbolism into Expressionism, Post-Impressionism into Cubism). Paul Gauguin was one of many artists not specifically connected to Decadentism who became interested in the culture of the Breton people, an “Other” society in modern France, which, by retaining its traditional language and culture and refusing to assimilate, seemed closer to nature and therefore to

authentic experience. Gauguin was to seek his paradise as far away from civilization as possible (or so he thought), in Tahiti.

The 1890s saw a significant increase in political activity on all sides. The Dreyfus Affair was a principal catalyst for the awakening from anomie and revery and a renewed confrontation with history. Suddenly France was more politicized than it had been since the days of the Commune of 1871. The Left (which by this time meant nascent Social Democracy; Jacobinism and Blanquism were obsolete) championed the causes of parliamentary socialism, trade unionism, anticlericalism, and civil rights for Jews, a widely despised minority in France. Its leading literary figure was Emile Zola, who supported Captain Dreyfus. The Right wing of the bourgeoisie, on the other hand, was becoming fiercely nationalistic and wanted restoration of French *gloire*, which entailed a strong desire for revenge on Germany for the stinging military defeat of 1870-71. From the perspective of the French Right, the Third Republic and the Catholic Church were both weak and contemptible; only a strong leader in the tradition of Caesar or Napoleon (i.e., a “republican monarch”) could restore order and greatness.

The revolutionary current, now dominated by anarchism, reemerged from underground to avenge the bloody destruction of the Commune. Terrorist acts were numerous in France as they were around the capitalist world. The most spectacular of these deeds were a

bombing in the Chamber of Deputies in 1893 and the assassination of Carnot, president of the republic, in 1894. Sympathy for anarchism was widespread in the Parisian bohemia. Louise Michel, great heroine of the Commune, was friendly toward the Decadents and Symbolists. But the commitment to anarchy on the part of the bohemians was, in most cases, in the nature of a fashion, and (sensibly enough) it did not extend to a willingness to commit acts of violence that would entail almost certain martyrdom when the state retaliated with stern repressive measures, which included executions of *attentat* militants.

A further indication of the collapse of the Decadent scene was the fall of Schopenhauer's philosophical pessimism from favor. It was replaced by theories that stressed life, energy, action, and individualism. The newly favored thinkers included Henri Bergson (vitalism), William James (pragmatism), the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and Friedrich Nietzsche, whose writings were just beginning to be translated into French at the end of the 1890s.

Nietzsche believed in individual greatness, human self-power, and the cult of Dionysus. He declared himself an enemy of decadence and rejected suffering, sacrifice, and asceticism. After denouncing Schopenhauer, Nietzsche repudiated his erstwhile mentor Richard Wagner, in large part because of Wagner's anti-Semitism. Nietzsche had a sweeping definition for the word *decadence*—he used it to describe Christian morality, nationalism, the

socialist (and anarchist) labor movement, and to a large extent rational thought. And nothing was more decadent to him than the modern democracy of herd-thinkers. His was a definition of the word that stood its usual meanings and targets upside down while retaining it as an epithet, a disparaging and abusive term.

Thus, the twentieth century dawned on an increasingly mechanistic and godless capitalist world haunted by its prehistory. Radical insurrectionist tendencies with certain common characteristics—hatred of Christianity and bourgeois democracy, a yearning for rebirth or renewal (often defined as a return to nature, to the soil, to ancient myth and community), and a desire to replace the big business commodity economy with corporatist guilds or syndicates—produced an uncanny similarity of anarchist and protofascist ideas. The quest for adventure and aestheticism in the twentieth century led some European artists, like Marinetti, to celebrate war and fascism; some English and American writers, most notably Ezra Pound, followed their lead. Already in the early years of this century the seeds were sown for the great dialectical modern nightmare—counterrevolution in the name of revolution, tyranny in the name of freedom.

The Legacy

The Romantic/Decadent currents produced repercussions that have persisted well into the twentieth century. The most obvious heir to the tradition was Surrealism. The

Surrealists explicitly endorsed and claimed as forebears (or saints, as some would have it) such figures as Sade, Rimbaud, Lautreamont, and Jarry. Like the Decadents, the Surrealists valued subjectivity, the quest for absolute freedom, dreams, the perverse and irrational, the transgressive, and the strange beauty of crystals, minerals, birds, and the vegetable kingdom.

Surrealism had a historical perspective the earlier movements lacked. Surrealism developed a more coherent and consistent attack on Christianity and shed no tears for the legacy of the Roman Empire. In fact, it turned its back on the Latin roots of French bourgeois civilization (i.e., Gallicanism or Chauvinism) and took its influences more from English literature and German philosophy; its immediate precursor was Dada, which had been a thoroughly international movement. In the 1920s the Surrealists were among first in France to recognize and make use of Hegel, Marx, and Freud (in that combination). They identified their project with the proletarian revolution and denounced the imperialism of the western capitalist powers (such as the colonial war waged in 1925 on the Rif people of Morocco by France and Spain), but they stumbled by getting caught up in sympathy for the authoritarian dogmas of Bolshevism and Trotskyism.

Another significant difference between Surrealism and its forebears lay in its image of women: however problematic this image may have been (sometimes in the spirit of Sade, more often in that of Goethe's concept of *das Ewig*

Weiblich, or the “eternal feminine”) it was nonetheless a labor of love and not of contempt. Women in the Surrealist movement were obscure objects of desire and representation, but often they were also active participants and creative subjects as well (if not to the extent of full equality, then much more so than in previous cultural movements).

Though saturated with Romantic influences, Surrealism was, as Rimbaud would have put it, “absolutely modern,” and hinted at the suppression of art and culture as categories separate from life. This is why the Situationists hailed it, along with Dada (though critically), for having laid the groundwork for the “revolution of everyday life.” The extent to which Surrealism became, in spite of its better intentions, another art *movement* is the best indication of its ultimate failure.

Another major legacy of literary Romanticism are the modern genres of science fiction/horror/fantasy, which received a major impetus from Mary Shelley’s magnum opus, *Frankenstein* (1818), and the weird tales of Edgar Allan Poe; developed further with Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and H.P. Lovecraft; and have continued vigorously in the twentieth century. But what goes under the name of “romance” in our time is for the most part a frivolous, cryptopornographic phenomenon of Hollywood, television, and mass-market publishing.

The American Way of Decadence

Thus far I have discussed Romanticism and Decadence

mainly as a function of the legacy of Greco-Roman antiquity and western European feudalism. These worldviews also made an impression in the USA, which is today the home of the postbourgeois, real domination of capital in its purest form. From its early colonial history North America was conceived as a new Eden. Some of the initial settlers, such as the Puritans, were narrow-minded authoritarians; others represented the most enlightened antinomian currents of the Protestant Reformation. Most of the revolutionary “founding fathers” were Freemasons who, like their French bourgeois counterparts, briefly rejected Christianity and conceived their newly created nation as a renaissance of the Roman republic and of Hellenic science.

In the early period of America's existence as a nation, European Romanticism found its parallel in the romance of the wilderness and the frontier. The natural beauty of the land was celebrated in art even as it and the native peoples were made to retreat before the onslaught of civilization's “manifest destiny.” James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, and Herman Melville were among the most illustrious of the American Romantics. As in Europe, the creative soul and the free imagination found themselves at odds with the reigning bourgeois society. The United States became the site of various experiments in the creation of Utopian communities either actual (New Harmony, Oneida) or planned (Coleridge's and Southey's “Pantisocracy”). But

the “flowers of evil” did not seem to grow very well in American soil, probably because the country remained largely agrarian and because of the rising tide of evangelical Protestantism. The Southern plantation aristocracy resembled in some ways effete European absolutism, but its total destruction in the Civil War, like the destruction of the French monarchy, did little to establish the kingdom of virtue on earth. The slaves were indeed liberated, only to become wage slaves, and the power of the US Federal Government was vastly increased.

After the Civil War, heavy industrialization, the closing of the frontier, and the beginnings of global empire, the focus of romantic sensibility among educated Americans of the Northeast shifted even more to Europe. Such artistes as Mary Cassatt, James M. Whistler, and Henry James elected to spend most of their time in western Europe (Paris, London, and Northern Italy) to escape the staid small-mindedness of utilitarian bourgeois society at home and also to participate in the artistic ferment of the European Symbolism, Impressionism, Aestheticism, and so on. The practice of voluntary expatriation continued on a significant scale through the 1930s (and again, less brilliantly, through the 1950s), though by World War I New York City was emerging as the home of America’s own cosmopolitan bohemia.

The 1960s and 70s produced the most recent mass explosion of the Utopian as well as dystopian elements of the Romantic legacy in the western world. This can be seen in

the spiritual movements of that time, as well as in the political movements. As in France of the late nineteenth century, the power of Christianity in the US began to decay rapidly and become replaced in some quarters by cults derived from Eastern religion. This, combined with elements of popular psychology (particularly à la Carl Jung), became the basis of the contemporary New Age movement, which has become an expression of flaky, confused upper-middle-class liberals. In the political (or antipolitical) realm the 1960s saw a significant resurgence of romanticism in the back-to-the-land hippie communes, as well as in the naive tendency, among students especially, to idealize the Third World peasant guerrilla movements. Many young leftists were all too eager to follow Mao's injunction to "serve the people" in a self-abnegating tradition that went back to the French revolutionaries' submission to Rousseau's concept of the "general will."

The Decadence of Capital

Much of what we have come to hear spoken of in the twentieth century as decadent has come from those calling themselves Marxists. For decades it was routine to hear the Soviet or Chinese leadership pontificating about the decadence of the West. They use(d) the word in a definitely moralistic sense, usually to condemn popular music from jazz onward or to attack the most blatant contradictions of modern capitalism, those attributes left over from its prespectacular stage, such as the grossness, ostentatious

display and consumption of the idle rich contrasted with poverty in the ghettos of the metropolis and starvation in the Third World. This brand of condemnation coming from Marxist-Leninists recalled, in however degraded a fashion, the Jacobin Republic of Virtue, and boasted that red bureaucrats were somehow morally superior to the non-Stalinist bureaucrats of the West (a lie even on that level). The moralism of Leninist bureaucrats is a class ideology, and as such it is an inheritance of Judeo-Christian (or in the case of the Chinese, Confucian) moralism and bourgeois positivism.

But, some will protest, this is not real Marxism at all, it is vulgarized, perverted, recuperated. They have a point; in some ways Leninism, Trotskyism, Stalinism, etc. are departures from the original communist project. Very well then, let us cast aside the ‘false’ Marxism and consider Marxism at its best, in its Western variants. These currents would include (besides the work of Marx and Engels themselves) a tradition coming out of the ultraleft of German and Dutch Social Democracy (Rosa Luxemburg, the council communists), Italian communism (Bordiga), and in more recent times, the Situationist International and its imitators. Of these currents, only that represented by Luxemburg promoted the theory of the decadence of capitalism. Her views were paralleled to some extent by Lenin during the early period of Bolshevism. These two leading theoreticians of the left of international Social Democracy in the early twentieth century saw capitalism as a historically dec-

adent mode of production. Marx himself had been for the most part an amoralist and had never spoken explicitly of “decadence,” although he had hinted that capitalism had a potential to destroy humanity. The theory of capitalist decadence, building on Marx’s study of the economic crises of capital as “fetters on the development of the forces of production,” was tied to theories of imperialism as the “highest and final” stage of capitalism, completing the global expansion of the system, liquidating precapitalist economies, and saturating the markets, leading to intensifying competition and war between the great powers.

The decadence, or stagnation, in the development of productive forces was thought to lead mechanically to stagnation in the total life of society (following Marx’s theory of the determining relationship of the material productive base of society to its cultural and ideological superstructure). Here is a concept of decadence that appears furthest from morality, though it is still moralistic, because it offers an alibi for the work ethic and for the development and socialization of bourgeois society during its early, “historically progressive” phase. The theory of a new historical period beginning sometime in the years before the world war of 1914-18 (seen in the catastrophist view as the definitive onset of decadence) and requiring “new tasks” for the proletariat rescues a glorious past for the Social Democratic reformism of the Second International. It even defends a progressive role, albeit however briefly, for the Third International.

In reality both the Second and Third Internationals ultimately served to strengthen and extend capitalism. This outcome was an entirely logical outgrowth of progressivist ideology in the founders of "scientific socialism." Marx and Engels saw democratic reformism as a necessary transitional phase (i.e., building of the productive forces by capitalism laying the groundwork for socialism and communism). Marxist defense of the labor ethic became an apology for its continuation during the transition stage. The ultralefts broke with the parliamentarism, social-patriotism, and trade unionism of mainstream Social Democracy, nonetheless they defended the principles of organization, discipline, and political consciousness that were carried to fetishistic extremes by the Bolsheviks. The mystique of the Proletariat was preserved. The original theorists of capitalist decadence, such as Luxemburg, underestimated Capital's subsequent ability to expand; it has in fact expanded more in the twentieth century than ever before in its history. Economic crises recur (we are certainly living in one now), but it remains to be seen whether this is the final and fatal plunge. Nostradamus and Chicken Little have been wrong before. Socialism or barbarism? The specter of nuclear holocaust has faded, but the prospect of global environmental devastation looms ever larger.

There is no proof that human beings necessarily have to be prodded by a precipitous drop in material living standards in order to struggle for freedom. The experience of Paris in 1968 is the best example of this. Nor is there

any proof that the conquest of bread in itself brings freedom, or that a vanguard leadership with correct or advanced ideas can raise the moral and spiritual condition of “the masses.” The revolt against work is anathema to Marxists because they cannot understand why humans should want to rebel against their “essence” as producers. The “revolutionary party” can exist only to control and thwart the human revolt against Capital. For more complete, detailed arguments against Marxist theories of capitalist decadence, I refer the reader to the writings of John Zerzan, Jacques Camatte, and the French group Interrogations (for the Human Community). It is true that not all Marxists speak of “decadence” or defend “scientific socialism.” Debord, for example, stated in *Society of the Spectacle* his view that what was best in the theory of Karl Marx was beyond scientific thought (i.e., beyond scientism or the naturalistic evolutionism that Engels, Kautsky, Bernstein, Plekhanov, Lenin, and Labriola were so fond of). The situationists too, it should be remembered, were of all Marxists the most in tune with the great Parisian tradition of decadence.

Decadent Modernism

The meaning of the word *decadence* seems to change considerably depending on who uses it. Decadence used as an epithet has been harnessed by both Right and Left ideological camps to attack bourgeois democracy. In the twentieth century the term has been employed by

totalitarian ideologies to condemn and justify the suppression of libertarian mores and modernist cultural experimentation. Fascist, Nazi, and Stalinist regimes all described as “decadent” thought, behavior, and culture that, far from being stagnant, was actually the most vital and interesting of its time. These regimes, after exhibiting an initial toleration of or even flirtation with modernism, all settled on a preference for neoclassical architecture and the kitsch realism of genre painting with its banality, literalness, and mandatory good cheer. Subjective imagination, on the other hand, became a matter for the police. For the Nazis (and not for them only) war was healthy and virile; pacifism effeminate and decadent. The contemporary society of the spectacle, whose “end of ideology” is officially democratic but contains strong residues of fascist influence, permits all artistic movements of the past, including the most critical and negative currents, to coexist as co-opted cultural commodities to be consumed, cafeteria style. Christianity, though moribund, staggers on and remains the bedrock belief of broad sections of society in modern capitalist states, particularly alas in the United States, but the instauration of an “age of faith” is out the question (even after the fall of Stalinism). The operative justification for the “new world order” will probably continue to rely as it has for much of this century, on technorationalism and various conflicting, recycled, and ever more vulgar modernist ideologies.

“Long Live Decomposition”

Is there any sense in which decadence is a valid concept? This rotten civilization, the “air-conditioned nightmare,” is certainly not going anywhere and indeed appears to be dying. If decadence can be defined as a function of the human species’ increasing separation from nature, then ours is definitely a decadent age. And true enough, mediocrity reigns. But if we must speak of the decay of the system, the question arises, was not the decadence built right into it from the start? When was this society ever “healthy”? Do you yearn for the days when law and order prevailed, authority was respected, and the reigning ideology was vigorous and unchallenged? Do we really need masterpieces in our own time if we don’t need God, the Pope, the Emperor, the Republic, Democracy, Socialism (or any other abstraction of alienation) to dedicate them to? It wasn’t “revolutionary preservation” of the cultural achievements of past epochs of domination that dadaist Marcel Duchamp had in mind when he suggested using a Rembrandt as an ironing board! The collapse in the modern era of the distinction between high and mass culture is among other things an indication that the proles either want, or think they want, their own “decadence.” After all, the fetishism of commodities in a mass society operates through a large degree of complicity from its victims, the worker-consumer citizens. Even if workers achieved the kind of leisure that was previously enjoyed by aristocrats or ancient Greek citizens, they

might very well decide that the “good things in life” that industrial society has to offer aren’t worth it. And then of course they wouldn’t be workers (i.e., domesticated human animals) any longer. Everyone can indeed live in his and her own cathedral (or mosque, for that matter). But this Arcadian idyll of anarchic, universal human community can probably only come about through the supersession of civilization along with its cultural blandishments. Is this really possible? Who knows, but look not for another renaissance.

Counterculture and aestheticism as means of fighting or escaping from the system apparently reached the point of historical exhaustion decades ago, and as I have attempted to show, there was much about Romanticism and Decadence that was contradictory: it could be for either revolution or reaction, freedom or unfreedom. But everyone dreams of the love, adventure, and authenticity that the world of work and commodities can never fulfill and the world of art and literature as well as the modern spectacle of pop culture can only represent. As long as the false community of Capital, indeed civilization itself, continues to exist, it will Continue to generate multifaceted modes of revolt, many of them in the tradition of bohemian decadence. Whatever the shortcomings of that may be, it is nonetheless more fun and more real than the public of Virtue or the posturing of secret societies of spartan heroes. Decadence can be a good thing if it gives us breathing space against biblical,

socialist, or feminist moralism. Romanticism, one of whose definitions is the desire of overcivilized and domesticated humans to recapture a feral existence, will never be suppressed until it is realized in the social insurrection. It's time for a real Roman holiday, so bring on the barbarians!

Book and Gun

Paul Z. Simons

A (rather disturbing) look at proto- and early fascist history and ideology in France and Italy

Libro e moschetto: fascista perfetto

(English: *Book and Gun: Perfect Fascist, Mussolini*)

Not only is reason not natural to man nor universal in humanity, but again, in the conduct of man and humanity, its influence is small.

—Hippolyte Taine

Before I begin I must admit to a certain amount of ambivalence towards both French proto-Fascism and Italian Fascism. Although I have no love at all for the

programmatic aims of the fascists (e.g., totalitarian government, territorial and capitalist expansion) there are a number of areas where these movements have much to teach post-industrial theorists. Foremost of these is the uneasy mixture of politics and irrationality that typifies the early proto-Fascist and Fascist movements, a synthesis that is essential to any theory of insurrectionary egoism.

author's note

Fascism was one of the most bizarre social phenomena of this century. The entire spectrum of political theorists, I believe, has failed in a fundamental sense to deal not only with the history of fascism but also its ideology and appeal. There have been two very broad schools of interpretation of fascism, the first, typified by Marxist historians (cf. Guerin), have held that despite a certain level of anticapitalist and antibourgeois rhetoric, fascism was essentially a device whereby the ruling classes retained what was theirs and then had the government steal what was not. These theorists tend to develop the thesis of fascism as one of the last stages in capitalist development. The second movement of critique, personified by Mumford and most liberal critics, deals with the issue of how such a thing could have happened in the first place. What drove essentially "normal" people to embrace fascism, an anti-democratic, totalitarian movement? Significantly, the answer that this school arrives at is generally something on the order of the ease and comfort of renouncing

freedom as well as some disingenuous remarks about “mass psychopathology,” brainwashing and the like. Neither of these “schools” has captured the fundamental appeal of the fascist “myth” insofar as both rely heavily upon a rationalist, “enlightened” critique of the phenomenon. An intellectual approach, incidentally, that any “thinking” fascist would have scoffed at. To understand the fascists one has to move beyond the realm of rationality in politics and begin to deal with the “heresies” of individual will, fury as political weapon, and the renunciation of democratic forms; it is here that one finds the fascist truly at home.

The French

As with most discussions that deal with politics and history, one is led inexorably back to France, the birthplace of all modern political debate. The first thinker to begin to stoke the fires of the extreme right was none other than Rousseau, the grandfather of modern revolutionary thought. In his conception of the General Will, Rousseau lays the groundwork for absolute obedience and also its complement, absolute authority. Rousseau theorizes that when a group of individuals, in order to form a society, relinquish their natural rights in favor of civil rights (the social contract), that they also merge their wills into a single will, the General Will. There are a few scary ramifications of such a conceptualization, and Rousseau, ever willing to follow a formula to its logical conclusion,

deals with all of them. The consequence of the General Will that concerns us is the essential identity of the General and the individual will. For Rousseau (and the Fascists) they are one and the same. The will of the nation expressed in legislation, declarations of war, whatever, are to be taken by the individual as manifestations of his own will. Individual conscience and responsibility are non-existent (or irrelevant) in such a system. In a converse construction, total obedience to the state is equivalent to total liberty. To refuse an order issued by the government of a nation-state is to refuse an order that the individual will has issued—such refusal is impossible.

All nineteenth-century French political thought may be seen in one way as reactionary; that is it finds its essential premise in events and expresses itself in response to them. Thus the French Revolution, the Paris Commune of 1871, and the Dreyfus Affair have provided grist for the mill of political theory in France. It was the Great Revolution, however, that proved to be the single most important detonator for the explosion of mid- and late-century theory. Extreme-left theorists were outraged at the idea of a political revolution without the concomitant transfiguration of economic forms. The extreme right was simply angered at just about everything that had occurred and in response it began to develop new approaches towards the issues that the Revolution had thrust upon the political scene, specifically liberty, authority, and the idea of the nation. It is here that one begins to find the

roots of what would eventually be called fascism.

Although Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821) may be called the first theorist of the extreme right—his formulations fit more readily into the category of conservative monarchism, and it is difficult to see any relation between his work and fascism. In addition, his critique is solidly rationalist and hence he falls outside the scope of this piece.

It is Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) who developed some of the most important intellectual formula in proto-fascist ideology. Taine, in bringing his enormous intellect to bear on the French Revolution, will in the process provide the extreme right with the basis in fact and hard-nosed scholarship that it had failed to materialize in the early part of the nineteenth century. After careful examination of what Taine referred to as the “irony” of the Revolution (i.e., how a movement against a monarchy could develop into a dictatorship) he found himself launching a full-fledged attack upon on the very foundations of the Enlightenment. The fundamental assumption of the *philosophes*, that all humanity progresses towards rationality, Taine negates in an affirmative (and elitist) fashion. As opposed to all humanity, he states that in fact, **some** men do Progress towards rationality; most, however, do not. He justifies this conclusion by pointing to the mob violence of the Revolution and the “excesses” of the Paris Commune. Thus while some men may be capable of learning a revolutionary doctrine, others simply

learn the slogans as an excuse to indulge in a collective insanity. For Taine, reason cannot and should never be a political tool of the left, the movements are dialectically opposed. The masses are incapable of reason, it is the property of the elite, the intellectual and the aristocracy. This is no flash-in-the-pan insight; Taine has effectively refuted almost all of the Enlightenment's theoretical gymnastics in one formulation. For instance, it follows that if the vast majority of humanity is incapable of reason, then the "drawing up" of the social contract is impossible. Men who do not reason cannot form a society of their own volition. Further, Taine will argue that society and the nation, far from being the product of a conscious act, is the result of long historical processes. The nation is not something that is chosen—it simply is. Two things should be evident from this discussion: Taine is an irrationalist. He may believe in reason, but he sees it has some very clear limitations. Taine is also on the edge of anti-democracy; again though he may grudgingly acknowledge that democracy in some ways is an efficacious form of government, he maintains that there are deep systemic flaws in the idea of the rule of the people.

The next thinker who demands our attention is Maurice Barres (1862-1923) and it is in his works that we will see one of the truly fascinating tendencies of French political thought. For, though Barres will amplify and enlarge the idea of the nation as the sole possessor of any sovereign right, he will also in the same sentence affirm

the right of the nation to realize revolution. It is here, with Barres and a handful of other thinkers from his generation (Sorel will also fall into this category) that we begin to see the merging of extreme left and extreme right political theory. This phenomenon will also be a mainstay of early Italian fascist methodology. It is also important to note that it is a tendency that has continued unabated to the present. The extremist right-wing students of the Sorbonne (*L'Occidente*) during the May-June events in 1968 will produce pamphlets and flyers that in language and methodology are identical with Situationist tracts.

In most cases, this confluence of extreme left and right political theory has been superfluous, the importance of Barres is that he will delineate political and social goals that are similar to, if not identical with the goals of the revolutionary left. Thus, Barres will continually refer back to the Proudhonian constructs of the federation of small communes and their integration via contract as the most natural (that is, French) mode for the conduct of human affairs. Though shying away from anticapitalist rhetoric, Barres is not beyond castigating centralized, monopolistic capitalist combines. In addition, Barres, in his exposition of the communal units that he sees as the basis of a potentially regenerated society will rely less on medieval forms, as Proudhon or Kropotkin clearly do, and he will paint these communes in colors more reminiscent of tribal groups. This in turn refers us back to the nation not only as the basis of sovereignty but also as the end result of

a long and complicated historical process.

Lastly, it must be noted that for most of his life Barres conducted a long and bitter dispute with French educational institutions. He felt that a pervasive and “unhealthy Kantianism” was at the core of much of the ills of French society. To teach the young that every action must accord to some notion of universal law was anathema for Barres. He maintained that all significant actions must be undertaken not in accordance with any universal law but with the best interests of France in mind. Barres couldn’t have cared less whether Dreyfus was, in reality, innocent or guilty, what was important for France was that the sentence of the courts be upheld. That, for Barres, was the only justice that a Frenchman could expect. Universal justice is dispensed in heaven, let Dreyfus find it there. In all his critiques of the French educational system Barres will invoke a single philosophical construct in defense of his arguments, the Hegelian dialectic.

The most well-known thinker of the French extreme right was Charles Maurras (1868-1952). Maurras is perhaps the most enigmatic theoretician of the early part of the century, an outspoken monarchist who was shunned in royalist circles, a vociferous Catholic most of whose works were placed in the Index by the Vatican, and finally an anti-modernist who fixed extremist right-wing ideology firmly in the modernist camp.

It was the Dreyfus Affair that first thrust Maurras, an unknown journalist, into the public eye. And a brief review

of the facts of the case are required in order to understand the impact that Maurras' first major article will have. In 1894 it was discovered that secrets were being passed to the German High Command. Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish captain attached to the French General staff was suspected of the crime. The news leaked to an anti-semitic rightist journalist who immediately published the discovery. Dreyfus was court-martialed and sent to Devil's Island. Not everyone believed in Dreyfus's guilt and a Colonel Piquart, while investigating the crime for himself, found that a critical piece of evidence had been forged by Dreyfus's successor, Colonel Henry. This miscarriage of justice galvanized the left and in a famous open letter to the President of the Republic, *J'accuse*, Emile Zola demanded a retrial. In 1898 a new trial was ordered by the Ministry of War. Colonel Henry's forgery was exposed in the press and in response the hapless colonel committed suicide. Enter Maurras, who, like most of the extreme right was less concerned with the scandalous activities of the military than he was about the loss of respect for the Army, the only French institution that had remained relatively unscathed by the pandemic corruption of the Third Republic.

Maurras, in response to the uproar following the Henry suicide, wrote an article entitled "The First Blood," and it is in this piece that all the aforementioned tendencies of the extreme right came into place, not as political categories, but as actual political arguments. Maurras firmly and unequivocally builds the myth of blood, Henry's

blood, that cries out for retribution, the blood of the nation that must be purified by fire and sword. Nazi propaganda will follow a similar pattern, as in the slogan *blut und boden* (blood and soil). The impact of “The First Blood” was phenomenal. The Right had been searching for an effective refutation of pro-Dreyfusard propaganda, and Maurras, far from providing such a refutation, shifted the blame fully from the army to the pro-Dreyfusards and via association back to Dreyfus himself. As one contemporary observer noted, Maurras said what no one else had even dared to think. Indeed, Maurras spent the rest of his life writing explanations and clarifications of the article, though he never retracted it. Interestingly, the Dreyfus Affair was concluded to the satisfaction of both left and right, Dreyfus was retried by the army and found guilty once again (with mitigating circumstances), he was then pardoned by the President of the Republic, rehabilitated and presented with the Legion of Honor.

As with most of the extreme right, Maurras will also develop a scathing critique of democracy, and it is here that one begins to notice that the journalist has borrowed certain extreme left constructs. First, Maurras contends that far from the stated liberal goals of investing the people with both Liberty and Authority, society has in fact vested the populace with Authority (by the vote) but taken away its Liberty, which is ensconced in the ruling classes. To Maurras, this is an inversion of how society should actually function, where the People are invested with Liberty, and

Authority resides in a ruling elite (for Maurras this elite is the aristocracy and the crown). Significantly, similar conclusions were being reached concurrently by extreme-left theorists, particularly the syndicalists. Though obviously the formulation by the anarchists veered from the royalist conclusions of Maurras, the substitution of the term union for monarchy produces an identical formulation. Thus, the General Secretary of the CNT could state in the first decade of the twentieth century that the two goals of the Confederation were the re-establishment of Liberty and the destruction of democracy.

As stated above, there was a confluence in the early part of the century between extreme-left and extreme-right theory, and more importantly there was a confluence of theorists. In the first decade of the twentieth century a group of young Syndicalists who were working with Georges Sorel and few of the intellectuals whom Maurras had associated with formed the *Cercle Proudhon*. Though the stated principles of the *Cercle* were ambiguous, the primary interest of the group was to develop an overpowering refutation of democracy. Further the *Cercle* leveled a scathing critique at both the bourgeoisie and the working class for their policies of parliamentary compromise and collaboration. The theorists of the *Cercle* clearly were delineating a society based less on class struggle than on all-out class war. Similar associations of extremists with similar goals would spring up all over Europe as the continent headed inexorably towards the

First World War. And it would be after the cataclysm of the “war to end all wars” that these associations would put their theories into practice.

It seems almost incredible to the late twentieth century observer that democracy could have come into such disrepute, especially when one considers the current liberal litany about the immutability of the democratic edifice. Yet, one is drawn to the conclusion that there were a significant number of intellectuals who were willing to renounce almost a century of reason in order to realize an anti-democratic, anti-rational, and in some instances an anti-bourgeois society. In addition, these intellectuals were willing to provide the theoretical justification for the unleashing of a political fury that would eventually provide for the establishment of such a society.

The Italians

The general impression during the last decade of the nineteenth century was that Italian democracy was doomed. This was so for a number of reasons. Most prominent was the sense of betrayal on both left and right that proceeded from the founding of the Italian state in 1860. The left, composed of republicans, socialists, and anarchists, had envisioned a Social Republic along the lines of Jacobin France or the Paris Commune, or at the very least a powerful legislative corps and an elected executive. The right had hoped for a strong non-constitutional monarchy with a foreign policy aimed

ultimately at building an empire. Thus, when a mixed constitutional monarchy came into being, no one was very happy. Another flaw of the Italian system were the restrictions placed on the electoral franchise. An electoral reform instituted in 1881 admitted some small shopkeepers and skilled workers onto the voting lists; this, however, instead of calming the political situation threw it into more turmoil as the new voters rallied around the radical republican standard of Giuseppe Mazzini.

The structure of the government itself provided further complaints. The men who had shaped the constitution had used the extreme centralization of the French state as their paradigm. This produced a dual negative result. First, it denied regional autonomy to areas that had enjoyed almost total freedom of action and commerce for centuries. After unification, political elites were more likely to pursue regional agendas than they were to follow national programs. This allowed for a confusing and constant ebb and flow of national political alliances based on convenience rather than ideological agreement. The resulting instability of ministerial personnel became so pervasive as to warrant its own word, *transformismo*. Finally, the Italian constitution provided for the division of the country into districts overseen by Prefects stationed in Rome. The Prefects held enormous power in their respective districts and often wielded this influence to sway local elections. Thus an entire class of politicians came into being who were significantly more

loyal to the government than they were to their own constituencies. By 1900, after a mere forty years, democracy in Italy seemed headed for certain extinction.

After the expansion of the electoral franchise in 1881, a significant Radical and Republican faction appeared in parliament. The opposition was augmented in 1892 the foundation of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI). The government, however, viewed this new entity and the attendant unrest that followed its formation with mounting distrust. Less than a year after its initiation the PSI was banned and most of its militants were driven underground. A number of elites viewed this development with some consternation, particularly industrialists, who were convinced that the expansion of political rights was linked to economic progress. In 1899 the PSI was once again declared legal and the leaders embarked on organizing the industrial north of the country.

Enter Benito Mussolini, born in Predappio, on 29 July, 1883. Mussolini's mother was a schoolteacher and his father was a blacksmith and a convinced revolutionary socialist. Mussolini received his teaching certificate in 1901 and after only one year as a teacher he emigrated to Switzerland. While there he became acquainted with the coterie of revolutionary socialist and syndicalist militants who perpetually sought asylum in the neutral country. Mussolini returned to Italy in 1905 and served in the army until 1909. After his discharge he emigrated to Trentino and while there served as the secretary to the local socialist

organization.

Mussolini rose quickly in the PSI. He seemed to embody the tough, restless spirit then sweeping through the ranks of the younger party members. His irrationalism, intellectual temperament and latent authoritarianism all pushed him rapidly into the leadership of the party. By 1912 Mussolini was ready for one of the several coups that would punctuate his life. During the Congress of Reggio Emilia, called to debate the Libyan War, the revolutionary wing of the party crashed its way into power and the militants, albeit somewhat hesitantly, offered Mussolini the editorship of the party organ, *Avanti!* Much to the chagrin of the more ideologically coherent militants, Mussolini at once opened up the pages of *Avanti!* to unorthodox writers and ideas.

The First World War was the crucible that would bring a faltering Italian democracy, a pacifist socialist party, a group of intransigent ex-soldiers, revolutionary syndicalists and Mussolini into a head-on, full-throttle collision. The war itself fractured Italian society. Those favoring neutrality included the Catholic Church, the PSI and the political allies of then-Prime Minister Giolitti. Those favoring intervention numbered among them dissident revolutionary socialists and syndicalists who believed war would hasten the Social Revolution, radical and republican democrats who feared Austrian and Prussian authoritarianism, and the nationalist right who wished to expand Italian territory at the expense of Austria.

Mussolini's position on the war wavered. Initially he affected the traditional socialist antimilitarist, internationalist convictions and preached passive opposition. This soon gave way to the perception that the war could be the device whereby the political system of *transformismo* might be crushed. In a famous editorial in *Avanti!* on 18 October, 1914 titled, "From Passive to Operative and Active Neutrality," Mussolini tried to edge the PSI towards a prowar stance. The top leadership of the party tried to change his mind but he remained unmoved and pursued his prowar stance in speeches and in the pages of *Avanti!* Mussolini's gamble, however, failed. He was jettisoned from the editorship of *Avanti!* and was then expelled from the party.

Italy entered the war on 24 May, 1915, under an agreement with the Entente Powers in the Treaty of London. The terms provided that in exchange for a declaration of war on the Allied Powers a number of disputed territories were to be ceded to Italy upon the successful cessation of hostilities.

Victory and peace did nothing to allay the deep divisions present in Italian society. Indeed, upon the signing of the armistice long suppressed intrasocial hostilities surfaced with a vengeance. Government to a great degree had lost its legitimacy, due to the denial of Italy its prewar territorial claims. Masses of ex-combatants and officers returned home to what amounted to a defeated nation. The emergent industrial proletariat and the peasantry all pursued conflicting and contradictory goals in the wake of

victory. Public opinion turned sharply against the Liberal ruling class. On the left the PSI enjoyed a renewed vigor, and to the right the Italian Nationalist Association and other groups received recruits and money as more and more Italians jumped the liberal, democratic ship.

Meanwhile Mussolini and the dissidents from the PSI viewed these developments with increasing interest. In 1915, after his expulsion from the PSI Mussolini and some of his comrades formed the *fasci di azione rivoluzionaria* (literally, the group or league for revolutionary action. Note the word *fasci* denotes nothing more sinister than a loose organization. Only later would Mussolini attempt to tie the image to the *fascio*, the bundle of sticks and ax carried during the Roman Empire, symbolizing unity) in order to propagate the message of leftist intervention. On March 23, 1919, a small group of revolutionary syndicalists and socialists, futurists, and ex-combatants met with Mussolini on the piazza San Sepolcro in Milan and founded the *fasci di combattimento* (the league of combatants).

The initial prospects for the *fasci* didn't look good. They preached a confused program of wartime profit confiscation, mild anti-clericalism, and protection for private property. Such a statement, however, belies the essential strength of the fascist movement, flexibility. It was a commonplace of fascist writing that the movement precedes the doctrine. And even with the first *fasci di azione rivoluzionaria* this was essentially true; being a

loose grouping of militants from different parties and ideologies that came into being in response to a specific problem, the war. The early fascists were also convinced of their elite position in the struggle for revolution. For the fascists the “dynamic minority” were the true revolutionaries distinguished by their sacrifice and idealism from the masses. The fascists in their consistent espousal of intervention came to view the war as an end in itself, a period of purification and regeneration. This, combined with a militant socialist ideology produced a perception of revolution not *through* war, as initially postulated, but *as* war. Mussolini provided a number of finishing flourishes to fascist ideology. Foremost of these was the extreme subjectivism that he tended to impart to most of his theoretics. For Mussolini socialism was not a *theorem* it was a *faith*. He soundly rejected the somewhat orthodox Marxism of his youth, much as Sorel did, in favor of a more militant, self-willed revolutionary credo.

As might seem obvious from the above discussion, such programmatic and methodological peculiarities would at best hamper a normal political party. The fascists, however, followed the above reasoning to its logical conclusion and declared their movement an “anti-party.” Mussolini in a famous speech of March 1921 said, “Fascism is not a church. It is more like a training ground. It is not a party. It is a movement...We are the heretics of all churches. We can permit ourselves the luxury of being both aristocrats and democrats.” Socialism was subtly referred to as a

religion, and the fascists as standing firmly against “red clericalism.” In another vein he railed against the discipline inherent in the socialist parties of the time, “statutes, regulations etc., that is all party stuff.” This derogation of party discipline and accouterments served the fascists well, as it appealed to the postwar discontent and undirected revolt then bubbling just below the surface of Italian society. Hannah Arendt was one of the first critical theorists to recognize the strength of such arguments, “The first to consider programs and platforms as needless scraps of paper and embarrassing promises, inconsistent with the style and impetus of a movement, was Mussolini...”

Then on September 12, 1919, an almost surreal political event occurred. Gabriele D’Annunzio, poet and military adventurer, marched at the head of two thousand students, ex-combatants, and assorted human flotsam left over from the war into the disputed city of Fiume. Initially D’Annunzio had proposed handing the city over to Italy, however, when Nitti, the Prime Minister, refused the offer D’Annunzio went him one better and declared Fiume a republic. Assisted by Alceste de Ambris, one-time anarchosyndicalist and fascist-to-be, D’Annunzio crafted the *carta del Carnaro*, the first constitution to section society into separate corporative entities and to declare music one of the cornerstones of the state. Daily life in Fiume was transformed almost overnight into a political circus. Concerts, drinking and fornication became the order of the day. D’Annunzio perched on a balcony high above the

central square of the city spoke to the citizenry on an almost daily basis. Fireworks, plays and more drinking completed the evening's events. Among D'Annunzio's followers were two groups worth mentioning, the *arditi*, shock troops left over from the war, and the *escocchi*, ex-navy men turned pirates who kept the entire city fed by raiding Adriatic shipping lanes when needed.

As expected, the Italian foreign policy apparatus had a very hard time explaining to the rest of the world why one of the country's most important dramatists and poets had seized a city and turned it into a Disneyland for politically oriented drunks. D'Annunzio, of course, didn't help the situation by broadcasting news of his adventure whenever possible. Deputations were sent to a number of important western European powers demanding recognition and the exchange of ambassadors. Finally after months of pleading Nitti prevailed upon the army to liberate the city. This was accomplished without firing a single shot, which in itself is not surprising given the fact that D'Annunzio, his followers and the entire citizenry were probably experiencing one of the most momentous collective hangovers of the twentieth century.

Although green with envy, the lessons of D'Annunzio's Fiume adventure were not lost on Mussolini. The idea of the forced seizure of an entire town by armed contingents was something totally new, but the fascists were willing to give it a try. The actual beginnings of what would become *squadrisimo* occur early in the fascist experience. On April

15, 1919, three weeks after the San Sepolcro meeting, a group of fascists torched the offices of *Avanti!*. During the summer of 1919, Mussolini urged the fascists to, "form armed groups composed of 200-250 sure, tried, and well-armed individuals." The growth of the squads and their importance were inextricably linked to the political orientation of the movement. Prior to the Fiume adventure they had been viewed as a purely national revolutionary force, as Mussolini swung to the right as a result of his inability to attract the proletariat and peasantry into the young fasci, the squads became a bludgeon with which to suppress bolshevism.

The squads were almost all recruited from agrarian areas hard hit by postwar inflation. The first major squadrist action occurred in Bologna during the inauguration of a new socialist administration in November 1920. The Bolognese fasci sparked a riot that left several dead and wounded. The city administration was suspended and the landlords moved in to crack the spine of the city's remaining socialist institutions, including the peasant union. The successes of the squads in Bologna escalated into wholesale war in the countryside. The fascists, and particularly the syndicalists, proved to be truly effective organizers when it came to repression. The telephone and the truck also proved to be of singular worth to the squadrists. Often, actions were organized by telephone between several different fascist groups, trucks were requisitioned from sympathetic landowners and the squads would roll into a town,

clear out the socialist vermin and return home. It was so well-organized as to be almost choreographed. The extent of the violence was phenomenal, it is estimated that during the first six months of 1921 that 119 labor chambers, 107 cooperatives and 83 peasant league offices were attacked, sacked, and destroyed. Meanwhile, the government, which had initially denounced fascist violence, began to see the utility of the squads in quelling socialist-inspired unrest and thus did nothing as the fascist incursions reached their crescendo in 1922.

By late summer of 1922 Mussolini had effectively turned the original program of the fascists to his own ends. The movement that had initially derogated political parties was now an effective bloc within the Italian parliament. Discipline, control and a rigid hierarchical structure had also been imposed by Mussolini and his henchmen, occasionally by stealth and in a few cases by coercion. The difference between the movement in 1916 or even 1919 with the structured and static form of 1922 is paramount. One post-industrial Italian historian has remarked that by 1922 Mussolinism had become a better name for the political ideology than fascism.

The March on Rome was less a revolution or even a coup d'état than it was an extra-legal cabinet shake-up. Regardless of how many fascists took part the military was consistently in control of the situation in and around Rome. In point of fact the final saga was played out in the apartments of the king and not in the streets of the city.

Liberalism gave way with a whimper and the Duce opened the city to the squads who burned a few subversive newspaper offices and then went home to milk the fruits of victory.

The history of fascism ends here. Mussolini found upon the assumption of power that the Italian State was just as difficult to lead without democracy as it was with it. He eventually took up the task of moderating various regional and sectional rivalries in much the same way that previous prime ministers had done. The only real difference was that Mussolini was probably a little better at the task and he could not be voted out of office. By the beginning of the Second World War Mussolini was having a harder and harder time justifying the regimes continued existence even to his supporters, and if the conflagration of the war had not occurred it is likely that fascism would have been jettisoned as an interesting experience but something of a waste of time.

Lessons

First and foremost of the lessons to be drawn from the fascist experience is the primacy of the irrational in politics. I don't know how many meetings I've sat through where some anarchist or libertarian has crowed about how rational a society without government could be. How economic and political systems will be allowed to develop freely without the fetters of emotion and national/regional prejudice. I find argumentation on such a level, particularly

by anarchists, to be hypocritical if not outright self-delusionary. For what is anarchism but the will of the individual to control his/her own life, the will to liberty. And such a concept, that of the autonomy of the self, is indefensible in rational political dialogue. Additionally, insurrectionists of all stripe have the difficulty of renouncing literally two centuries of rationalist speculation. Both Marxists and anarchists find themselves bound with the chains of either dialectical materialism on one side or extreme enlightenment ideologies on the other. Neither of which provide the fire, the spark necessary to ignite an insurrectionary conflagration. Ultimately, I am an anarchist because of an irrational desire for liberty: why should I construct a political dialogue (or a new world) using a methodology that I myself have renounced?

Fascism also provides us with an example of the strength of the myth. As Sorel theorized, all social movements are motivated to greater or lesser degrees by social myths. Such myths, though derived from actual situations and conditions, function on a deeper level than that affected by concrete reality. Again the lesson to be learned is that to affect individuals, to make ordinary people do extraordinary things (as in an insurrectionary situation), more is needed than a roll call of statistics, or a dialectical syllogism that now is the time. To achieve a better world, one needs the vision to imagine it and the courage to ask others to imagine it as well.

From the French proto-fascists comes the necessity of

aiming a withering attack upon democracy itself. For though I've heard it said many times that anarchism is nothing more than direct, participatory democracy, I find nothing further from the truth or more misleading. Democracy always implies bowing to the will of the majority, it always implies the lie of the voting. Further, I am always surprised that individuals who identify themselves as enemies of the dominant culture use one of its main theoretical props as a basis of their critique. I see no difference between a bourgeois and a workers' democracy, both are tyranny of majorities, both deny my right to choose the course and contour of my life. In addition I believe both economic classes are equally mundane and idiotic, and hence equally incompetent to rule.

Finally, something must be said about fascist tactics: the evolution of the squads and their reckless expeditions. If nothing else the squads were a physical manifestation of the fascists' single-minded drive to achieve their "revolution". Anarchists, however, when they consider even the possibility of a successful incursion into the political sphere tend to degenerate into sniveling hulks of beer-stained denim. Within the past two years a number of autonomous groups have attempted to build a "fighting" movement, only to be sidetracked into protest marches and by now probably candle-light vigils. This is so because such tactics always rely on a negative, the ultimately reformist response of Marxists and others trying to goad the government into doing something. Alternatively, the

use of affinity groups to realize an insurrectionary situation in a town or geographic region, where Utopia can be at least begun strikes me as a far more positive tactic. In the words of the enragés, “We ask for nothing, we demand nothing. We will take, we will occupy.” Anybody got a light?

Immediatism

Hakim Bey

- i. All experience is mediated—by the mechanisms of sense perception, mentation, language, etc.—& certainly all art consists of some further mediation of experience.
- ii. However, mediation takes place by degrees. Some experiences (smell, taste, sexual pleasure, etc.) are less mediated than others (reading a book, looking through a telescope, listening to a record). Some media, especially “live” arts such as dance, theater, musical, or bardic performance, are less mediated than others such as TV, CDs, Virtual Reality. Even among the media usually called “media,” some are more & others are less mediated, according to the intensity of imaginative participation they demand. Print & radio demand more of the imagination,

film less, TV even less, VR the least of all—so far.

- iii. For art, the intervention of Capital always signals a further degree of mediation. To say that art is commodified is to say that a mediation, or standing-in-between, has occurred, & that this betweenness amounts to a split, & that this split amounts to “alienation.” Improv music played by friends at home is less “alienated” than music played “live” at the Met or music played through media (whether PBS or MTV or Walkman). In fact, an argument could be made that music distributed free or at cost on cassette via mail is *less* alienated than live music played at some huge We Are The World spectacle or Las Vegas nightclub, even though the latter is live music played to a live audience (or at least so it appears), while the former is recorded music consumed by distant & even anonymous listeners.
- iv. Both the tendency of Hi Tech & the tendency of Late Capitalism impel the arts farther & farther into extreme forms of mediation. Both widen the gulf between the production & consumption of art, with a corresponding increase in “alienation.”
- v. With the disappearance of a “mainstream” & therefore of an “avant-garde” in the arts, it has been noticed that all the more advanced & intense art-experiences have been recuperable almost instantly by the media & thus

are rendered into trash like all other trash in the ghostly world of commodities. “Trash,” as the term was redefined in, let’s say, Baltimore in the 1970s, can be good fun—as an ironic take on a sort of inadvertent folkkultur that surrounds & pervades the more unconscious regions of “popular” sensibility—which in turn is produced in part by the Spectacle. “Trash” was once a fresh concept, with radical potential. By now, however, amidst the ruins of Post-Modernism, it has finally begun to stink. Ironic frivolity finally becomes disgusting. Is it possible now to *be serious but not sober*? (Note: The New Sobriety is of course simply the flip-side of the New Frivolity. Chic neo-puritanism carries the taint of Reaction, in just the same way that postmodernist philosophical irony & despair lead to Reaction. The Purge Society is the same as the Binge Society. After the 12 steps of trendy renunciation in the 90s, all that remains is the 13th step of the gallows. Irony may have become boring, but self-mutilation was never more than an abyss. Down with frivolity—Down with sobriety.

Everything delicate & beautiful, from Surrealism to breakdancing, ends up as fodder for McDeath’s ads; fifteen minutes later all the magic has been sucked out, & the art itself dead as a dried locust. The media-wizards, who are nothing if not postmodernists, have even begun to feed on the vitality of “Trash,” like vultures regurgitating & re-consuming the same carrion, in an obscene ecstasy of self-referentiality. Which way to the egress?

- vi. Real art is play, & play is one of the most immediate of all experiences. Those who have cultivated the pleasure of play cannot be expected to give it up simply to make a political point (as in an “Art Strike,” or “the suppression without the realization” of art, etc.). Art will go on, in somewhat the same sense that breathing, eating, or fucking will go on.
- vii. Nevertheless, we are repelled by the extreme alienation of the arts, especially in “the media,” in commercial publishing & galleries, in the recording “industry,” etc. And we sometimes worry even about the extent to which our very involvement in such arts as writing, painting, or music implicates us in a nasty abstraction, a removal from immediate experience. We miss the directness of play (our original kick in doing art in the first place); we miss smell, taste, touch, the feel of bodies in motion.
- viii. Computers, video, radio, printing presses, synthesizers, fax machines, tape recorders, photocopiers—these things make good toys, but terrible addictions. Finally we realize we cannot “reach out and touch someone” who is not present in the flesh. These media may be useful to our art—but they must not possess us, nor must they stand between, mediate, or separate us from our animal/animate selves. We want to control our media, not be con-

trolled by them, and we would like to remember a certain psychic martial art which stresses the realization that the body itself is the least mediated of all media.

- ix. Therefore, as artists & “cultural workers” who have no intention of giving up activity in our chosen media, we nevertheless demand of ourselves an extreme awareness of immediacy, as well as the mastery of some direct means of implementing this awareness as play, immediately (at once) & immediately (without mediation).
- x. Fully realizing that any art manifesto written today can only stink of the same bitter irony it seeks to oppose, we nevertheless declare without hesitation (without too much thought) the founding of a “movement,” IMMEDIATISM. We feel free to do so because we intend to practice Immediatism in secret, in order to avoid any contamination of mediation. Publicly we’ll continue our work in publishing, radio, printing, music, etc., but privately we will create something else, something to be shared freely but never consumed passively, something that can be discussed openly but never understood by the agents of alienation, something with no commercial potential yet valuable beyond price, something occult yet woven completely into the fabric of our everyday lives.
- xi. Immediatism is not a movement in the sense of an aes-

thetic program. It depends on *situation*, not style or content, message, or School. It may take the form of any kind of creative play that can be performed by two or more people, by & for themselves, face-to-face & together. In this sense it is like a game, & therefore certain “rules” may apply.

xii. All spectators must also be performers. All expenses are to be shared, & all products that may result from the play are also to be shared by the participants only (who may keep them or bestow them as gifts, but should not sell them). The best games will make little or no use of obvious forms of mediation such as photography, recording, printing, etc., but will tend toward immediate techniques involving physical presence, direct communication, the senses.

xiii. An obvious matrix for Immediatism is the party. Thus a good meal could be an Immediatist art project, especially if everyone present cooked as well as ate. Ancient Chinese & Japanese on misty autumn days would hold odor parties, where each guest would bring a home-made incense or perfume. At linked-verse parties a faulty couplet would entail the penalty of a glass of wine. Quilting bees, tableaux vivants, exquisite corpses, rituals of conviviality such as Fourier’s “Museum Orgy” (erotic costumes, poses, & skits), live music & dance—the past can be ransacked for appropriate forms, &

imagination will supply more.

- xiv. The difference between a 19th century quilting bee, for example, & an Immediatist quilting bee would lie in our awareness of the practice of Immediatism as a response to the sorrows of alienation & the “death of art.”
- xv. The mail art of the 70s & the zine scene of the 80s were attempts to go beyond the mediation of art-as-commodity & may be considered ancestors of Immediatism. However, they preserved the mediated structures of postal communication & xerography & thus failed to overcome the isolation of the players, who remained quite literally out of touch. We wish to take the motives & discoveries of these earlier movements to their logical conclusion in an art that banishes all mediation & alienation, at least to the extent that the human condition allows.
- xvi. Moreover, Immediatism is not condemned to powerlessness in the world, simply because it avoids the publicity of the marketplace. “Poetic Terrorism” and “Art Sabotage” are quite logical manifestations of Immediatism.
- xvii. Finally, we expect that the practice of Immediatism will release within us vast storehouses of forgotten power, which will not only transform our lives through the

secret realization of unmediated play, but will also inescapably well up & burst out & permeate the other art we create, the more public & mediated art.

And we hope that the two will grow closer & closer & eventually perhaps become one.

Death to Democracy!

Anonymous

The real meaning of the collapse of state socialism is being buried under a big pile of smug, self-satisfied, pro-democracy, pro-capitalist propaganda churned out by politicians and the media.

Workers are being told that despite a few minor hiccups, world capitalism reigns supreme and socialism is finished. We are being told that there is no alternative other than to grin and bear it and put up with all the poverty, attacks, and austerity that are the reality of capitalism and democracy in both the west and the east. We are being told that *democracy* is the finest achievement, that it has all we could ever want and no other perspective is possible in the future. Capitalist democracy will rule everywhere forever!

The immediate reaction on the left is to criticize this

democracy as a “bourgeois” democracy, biased and under the control of the rich. This suggests that democracy on its own is neutral and is not to blame and what we need is a “workers’ democracy.” But is modern democracy only at fault because it is currently controlled by capitalism or is democracy itself in fact an inherently capitalistic political system that inevitably promotes the rule of the rich?

Miserable Citizens!!

Democracy simply means the “rule of the people” and this at first sight appears to be harmless and innocent enough. But the term “people” is a loaded political term that has a specific meaning; in the political context the people means the... *citizens*! The *citizens* are the middle classes, and workers with middle-class pretensions/illusions, living in bourgeois society. The role of the citizens is to compete as separated “individuals” in the marketplace, respecting private property, upholding the laws, and serving the interests of money, profit, and commodities. Democracy: the rule of the people as citizens therefore represents the rule of money, the rule of profit, and the rule of commodities. Modern citizenship is a specifically capitalist condition. Today “democracy” is the political expression of the capitalist market economy: *democracy is the political wing of capitalism*.

With democracy people make decisions as isolated individuals rather than in communion. Because liberal democracy is based on the false assumption that human so-

ciety always consists of lonely atomized individuals with separate competing interests in the first place, it always helps to reproduce such a capitalistic arrangement in society as a result. Democracy enforces individual struggle and competition instead of class struggle and solidarity. "The people" is the opposite of the proletariat. "Individualism" is not the same as authentic individuality in real human community, where interests harmonize and complement each other (the freedom of one person to drive a bus increases the freedom of others to travel, etc.). To the contrary, "individualism" is the bourgeois political concept of society where the interests of individuals are placed in conflict in a war of all against all that can only be resolved by the social contract-the liberal state, democracy, and the rule of law.

Liberal Garbage

"Democratic political liberty": What are we to understand by that? Perhaps that we are free from the state and its laws? No; on the contrary, the proletariat's subjugation under the capitalist state and its laws. Political liberty means that the Police the state, is free; freedom of ideology that ideologies are free; freedom of trade that trade is free, not that we are free from the state, free from religion, free from ideology, free from trade, or that we are rid of them. Their liberty is our slavery. And what are we to understand by "free elections"? These are just mystifying safety valves under which the oppressed classes enjoy the

privilege of deciding once every several years which representatives of the propertied classes shall represent and suppress the dispossessed while sitting in parliament. Elections and voting systems also give rise to the tyranny of majority dictatorship and the bullying of minorities when the majority are swayed by reaction. Hitler and Mussolini were both democratically elected into power, they were both “democrats”! A “free press”? But whose press is this free press? It’s the ruling class that owns most of the means of dissemination of information and opinion. From the beginning they have used lies to make the exploited accept their fate. But what distinguishes the times in which we live is the extreme degree of state totalitarianism set up to control how people think. It does not broadcast just one official “truth,” but fifty competing “truths,” so that everyone can make their choice as in a supermarket, and which in reality are nothing but fifty variations of the same lie. “Freedom of assembly”? Again it is the ruling class that owns and jealously guards all the magnificent places in which the proletariat might assemble—until we can all lounge around in castles, palaces, and stately homes rather than high rises or even cardboard boxes then the equal right of assembly is a pious and hollow abstraction. And of course the system soon suspends even its own notion of “free assembly” when workers threaten to get out of hand.

Cretinization of the Masses

The rulers of the world are currently engaged in a global democracy campaign. In the east this has taken the form of glasnost and perestroika, the end of Communist party rule, and the introduction of multiparty elections. In the west the democracy campaign takes the form of active citizenship, equal rights, wider share and property ownership, elections, and media-manipulated public debate. The overall aim of these campaigns is to promote the move to a more integrated, more competitive global capitalist market with workers being encouraged to take part in the “democratic debate,” to participate in the restructuring, in self-managed exploitation and self-imposed austerity measures.

In Poland, the democracy movement has led to the farce of the religious nationalist “workers’ independent trade union” Solidarnosc seizing state power, telling strikers to go back to work, and announcing massive cutbacks, privatizations, lay-offs, price rises....

Previous economic austerity measures have led to periodic uprisings in Poland over the past two decades against the stalinists. But this round of harsh measures (brought to you courtesy of IMF productions, directed by Lech Walesa, script by John Paul II, special effects by General Jaruzelski) were hardly opposed. This shows how powerful democracy is as a device for whacking the population on the head with and turning them into cretinized cabbages ready to accept anything in the name of *freedom*, *saving the nation*, and the lie of *future wealth and prosperity for all*. Throwing an election at a time of crisis is a well-

established means of diverting workers' struggles from material and revolutionary demands into supporting liberal political aims instead, such as supporting one bunch of capitalist leaders instead of another. Disillusionment and anger with the Solidarnosc government is however beginning to grow as many wake up to what Capitalist democracy really means.

In the Soviet Union, rather than bringing genuine prosperity the "perestroika" has brought a huge increase in misery and poverty for millions. Religious and nationalist pogroms are on the increase as people look for easy solutions and scapegoats for deteriorating conditions. But at the same time labor militancy is growing, especially in basic industries like coal-mining. In the Soviet Union the economic reforms are accompanied by democratic political changes that are supposedly a counterbalance to the sacrifices that workers must consent to. In reality they are nothing else but another part of the same process of deterioration of living conditions and the submission of Soviet workers to the rule of the democratized state. The perestroika is supposedly the political balance to economic reforms. In reality it is the very condition of the reforms: to identify "inefficiency," to impose "rationalization" and involve Soviet society in preparing price rises, unemployment, etc. Multiparty democracy and free unions are being offered in exchange for lay-offs but in reality the parties and unions will allow for and help plan these layoffs by the control they try to exert. The apparent polarization

in the Soviet leadership between “hardliners” like Ligachev and assorted varieties of “reformers” like Gorbachev and Yeltsin serves to divert struggles away from material demands into a bourgeois comedy show of fake opposition and spurious debate. This is what is happening in the big “clash” between Liggy and Gorby concerning the strikes that have been taking place and concerning the nationalist movements and pogroms, or more precisely how to defeat the former by means of the latter, and how to prepare the proletariat in the USSR for more repression through polarizing the proletariat around support for one or other bourgeois faction. By “choosing” one side, workers become the passive spectators of not only a masquerade of struggle between different bourgeois factions that are complementary, but above all the austerity policy of which only the way of implementing this policy is debated and not the actual policy itself.

The collapse of the Berlin Wall and the democracy campaign in east Germany, which temporarily increased material freedoms, has now paved the way for a united nationalistic capitalist Germany. Vain careerist upwardly mobile intelligentsia, who have done for themselves in the democracy movements of countries like Czechoslovakia, have found themselves marginalized in east Germany. New Forum, who had their sights on leading east Germany, were simply bulldozed aside by the big west German political machines backed by west German business. Instead of the promised prosperity for all, economic unifica-

tion in Germany brings a big attack on living and working conditions in both east and west. In east Germany economic union has led to one of the biggest closure and redundancy waves in the history of capitalism. Now the west German currency has taken over the east German economy. And in west Germany workers will face higher taxes and competition from low wages in the east.

Democracy Will Steal Your Furniture

Here in the UK we see democracy being shoved down our throats in the form of a citizenship campaign and a privatized share-owning/home-owning democracy. Meanwhile the fake official opposition moans about civil rights, fairer democracy, and welfare. Wider-share ownership is a cleverly-disguised method of reintroducing piece rates (where workers feel they have to accept sacrifices for the sake of *their* company and can only be rewarded with a small share of the profits). This is a petty bonus in exchange for increased productivity. The home-owning democracy is now a nightmare for millions having to spend their time endlessly paying off spiraling mortgages. The icing on the democracy cake is the jolly Poll tax designed, so we are told, to make local government more democratic and accountable. The Poll tax places a greatly increased burden on the poor to pay for services they are forced to depend on when they can least afford to pay for them. This is a tax imposed by the democratic Conservative government and ruthlessly enforced and collected by democratic Labour

councils who threaten to arrest wages, seize furniture, and even imprison those who don't pay!

The Global Democracy Swindle!

The worldwide bourgeoisie has set up a gigantic ideological construction in the global democracy campaign. *Democracy* everywhere! The foundations of this are the economical needs: the need the system has for a proletariat that is divided and submitted, the need to be competitive. But it is not enough that proles should just be cheap, submitted, etc. for capital to be competitive. It is much more important that proles should want to work, want to participate in the national effort, should want to be citizens in the democratic state. The bourgeoisie has to transform apolitical individualism into active support for the state. It has to encourage workers to participate in the democratic media debate, concern themselves actively with the questions and problems of running the capitalist economy from the system's point of view, and offer their ideas and opinions for the use of the system. The workers' rejection of the unions and political parties has to be bypassed with another link between workers and the state. The bourgeoisie is co-opting and recuperating reforms and campaigns that, since 1968, were only promoted and called for by more peripheral factions (leftists, disarmers, ecologists, greens...). The utilization by the central structures of the state of reforms proposed for nearly twenty years by more "radical" elements is designed to destroy workers' struggles.

The bourgeoisie itself admits that the aim of these campaigns is to obtain the democratic participation of the whole population as citizens instead of proletarians, so as to develop productivity. A campaign against pollution for instance can be co-opted by the state and turned into a campaign against free expression... removing graffiti and flyposting, etc.; or a campaign to help capitalist commerce move faster—by removing litter and obstructions from highways so traffic can move quicker, thus increasing traffic pollution! Or a campaign against free spaces—enclosing and controlling unused open spaces, especially places where proles might gather, in the name of “conservation,” or a campaign against the poor—gentrifying whole areas, restricting access and driving out the poor. The state aims to mobilize citizens to enforce these attacks by encouraging them to “participate in democracy” and “have their say,” join state-sponsored community groups campaigns, community watch schemes, and the like.

Discontent with the existing parliamentary democracy can itself be co-opted and turned into support for yet another New Improved Formula democracy. The more radical of the system’s political parties call for such things as proportional representation, direct democracy, or devolution. Sometimes they put forward demands for welfare democracy, workers’ democracy, and civil/equal rights. It is a serious mistake to demand more democracy or direct democracy instead of parliamentary democracy or to argue for “workers’ democracy” instead of bourgeois de-

mocracy. So many times the class struggle has been recuperated by such diversions. A more efficient democracy means a more efficient capitalist market and therefore more austerity and alienation. Civil rights and equal rights do not bring an end to the system of inequality but instead give everyone the opportunity to compete in the market and play a role in the unequal system. In the name of democratic equal rights and "positive discrimination," the poor and oppressed are broken up into sectional groups and forced to fight each other over diminishing resources.

The Workers' Democracy Swindle

It is a mistake to conceive of democracy as an element of socialism. Socialists (even communists and anarchists!) often talk in terms of "workers' democracy" or "total democracy," as if the struggle for socialism consists of winning more and more democratic rights within the framework of capitalism. In reality, capitalist democracy is a stage in the taking of power by capital, and today it has resulted in the increasing isolation and loneliness of individuals buried under a pile of commodities. Born as the illusory solution to the problem of the separation of human activity and society, democracy will never be able to resolve the problem of the most separated, atomized, and lonely society in the whole of history. Democracy leads to increasing totalitarianism; the fight for a "more democratic" system will end in the strengthening of the system.

A struggle for democracy is not a short cut allowing

proletarians to make a revolution without realizing it. It is wrong to think that democracy automatically introduces conditions more favorable than dictatorship to revolutionary activity, since the former turns immediately to dictatorial means when menaced by revolution, especially when the “workers’ parties” are in power. And when it comes to revolutionary activity, “workers’ democracy” or self-management are not necessarily any more revolutionary than planning by a minority or a vanguard. What matters is not so much the abstract form of organization adopted in the struggle (such as community resistance groups, strike committees, workers’ councils/assemblies, etc.) but the particular material aims that each organization is created for and fights for in practice (free homes, communal distribution of goods, ending Poll tax and wage slavery, and so on). The communist material program is what matters, the revolution is not simply a matter of what the majority wants at any given moment, arbitrary rule for its own sake. If revolution were just a matter of what the majority of workers wanted right now then a revolutionary workers’ democracy in this part of the world would give us more page three of *The Sun*! more royal walkabouts! more discrimination against minorities! more police! and more Kylie Minogue and Jason Donavon!

In 1969 in east London, “workers’ democracy” meant dockers on strike in support of Enoch Powell. In 1974 in northern Ireland “workers’ democracy” meant a Loyalist workers’ strike in support of the Protestant ascendancy

over Catholic workers. In 1984 in Nottingham “workers’ democracy” meant scabbing during the miners’ strike and the formation of the union of democratic (ha ha!) mine-workers. If the majority of workers are given a token share in capitalism, are smothered with consumerism, and are conditioned into supporting the system, then workers’ democracy leads straight back to capitalist democracy. This indeed is the capitalist dream for the next century, a capitalist system that has solved its contradictions or at least covered them up with decentralized production in small self-managed enterprises, wider share ownership and no bureaucracy: a system where bourgeois democracy is workers’ democracy and vice versa!

“The Negation of Democracy”

But democracy is not having everything its own way. In those countries where capitalist democracy has only recently triumphed over bureaucratic or authoritarian regimes, disillusionment and discontent have already started setting in after the initial wave of euphoria. Workers and the oppressed can see that democracy is failing to solve their problems, the promises of endless freedom and consumerist prosperity for all were so much rubbish and daily life is not much better than it was before; in some cases it is even worse! In those countries that have long been under the democratic comedy show, the consumerism and prosperity that has been used since the war by the ruling class to buy social peace is no longer

working. Consumerism is running out of ideas; all it can do is regurgitate old commodities, and commodities just don't satisfy anymore. Alienation is growing. On top of this, the class struggle has resurfaced with a vengeance, there are growing economic problems, and for millions "prosperity" has given way to blatant austerity. Democracy is becoming a victim of its own success; as democracy extends its rule everywhere, then increasingly democracy itself is brought into question when problems and struggles rise up. When, for example, Mrs. Thatcher described Poll tax rioting as "the negation of democracy," she was quite correct. The purist form of democracy is its total political monopoly, the state free of all its enemies, with all parties, including the opposition, fully integrated into the same system and all pushing the same basic policies of austerity. It does not matter much whether Labour blames the Poll tax on the Tory government or if the government blames the Poll tax on Labour councils, either way they both function as arms of the same system, they both in practice enforce the same "democratic" austerity against us, they both enforce the same "democratic rule of law."

Today, whenever serious struggles break out, whatever their initial cause or grievance, they soon become struggles against the whole system. Resistance to paying the Poll tax soon becomes resistance to the authorities in general, resistance to police, resistance to employers, resistance to the bailiffs, resistance to paying for anything at

all, resistance to the whole democratic rule of law! If democracy everywhere is the instrument of austerity then any material confrontation workers have with austerity is immediately a confrontation with democracy. From now on any outbreak of class struggle is immediately the negation of democracy.

Max '90

Stolen from: Anticlockwise, Max Stirner,
Red Menace, Barrot, World Rev., G.C.I....

BLACK EYE was born in a basement in the Lower East Side's Heart of Darkness. Half a dozen comrades armed with even fewer weapons (besides pens and typewriters, a few cartoons and quite a few ideas) set out to upend this rotten yuppified, spectacular world and provide first-hand reports of its demise. Initial articles ranged from paganism to the poverty of student life to the confessions of an ex-Trotskyist. Fiction and poetry complement revolutionary theory and resurgent utopianism. Eclecticism continues to be a virtue, is desired and cultivated, a political gesture itself in an era of heterogeneity. The common ingredient is liberation.

The domination of the specialists will come to an end. Publishing is a good place to start. "Hey I can do that!" With a few bucks, a typewriter, and a xerox machine, anyone can be a modern Tom Paine, celebrating their opinions, communicating with others. BLACK EYE does not seek to "grow" and pities those held captive by economic and productivist outlooks. Instead we hope to see similar projects initiated by others everywhere and all over our post-industrial landscape. We think that this will be an important step in people beginning to think for themselves again...

BLACK EYE is a proto-council of the marvelous.

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